

# ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES OF THE EU: WHERE DOES TÜRKİYE STAND ON?\*

*AB'nin Çevre ve İklim Politikaları: Türkiye'nin Politikalara Uyumu Ne?*

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the environmental and climate policies of the European Union (EU), mostly leader in this field, and Türkiye's position. States and especially private companies have attributed high hopes to economic growth, became wealthier and more global in the 1970s. However, they have overlooked the negative impacts of their actions. The adverse effects on the climate have increased day by day. On account of this reason the EU has started to adopt radical policies. On the other hand Türkiye, aiming for EU membership, has felt same side effects of the environmental and climate changes issues. However, it can barely say that Türkiye has succeeded its targets.*

**Keywords:** Türkiye, EU, Climate, Climate Policies, Environmental Policies.

## Öz

*Bu makale, bu alanda çoğu zaman lider olan Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) çevre ve iklim politikalarını ve Türkiye'nin bu politikalara karşı durumunu incelemektedir. 1970'li yıllarda devletler ve özellikle özel şirketler ekonomik büyümeye büyük umutlar bağlayarak daha zengin ve küresel olmaya başlamışlardır. Ancak gerçekleştirdikleri eylemlerin olumsuz sonuçlarını gözden kaçırmışlardır. İklim konusunda yaşanan olumsuzluklar her geçen gün artış göstermiştir. Bu nedenle AB radikal politikalar benimsemeye başlamıştır. Diğer yandan AB üyelik hedefi olan Türkiye de AB gibi çevre ve iklim sorunlarının yan etkilerini hissetmeye başlamıştır. Bu çerçevede bazı politikalar benimsemiş olsa da Türkiye'nin hedeflerinde ulaşamadığı ve başarısız olduğu görülmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, AB, İklim, İklim Politikaları, Çevre Politikaları.

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# ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES OF THE EU: WHERE DOES TÜRKİYE STAND ON?

## INTRODUCTION

In the 1960's environmental degradation depends on especially economic growth has been started to seen all over the World. In the early years of its establishment the EU (Then European Economic Community) did not see environmental issues as a problem. However, with the 1970s the EU started to pay attention on this issue. The EU realized that environmental problems have no limits. Therefore the EU countries started to adopt some common policies such as Environmental Action Programs and show solidarity about the problems. Also, it was realized that if the EU wants to ensure the continuity of some activities outside of the environment, it has to protect the environment firstly.

As for climate change, especially in the 1990s, the EU started to feel it very highly. By adopting certain strict policies, it was tried to keep the climate change impacts such as global warming, forest fires, extreme temperature rise etc. on very low levels. Also, some future targets such as limited carbon emissions, promotion of renewable energy etc. are determined.

Countries like China, Singapore, and India are on the top of the list of most vulnerable countries due to environmental and climate change because of their toxic pollution. On the other hand Türkiye is also one of the most vulnerable countries to environmental problems and climate change. Therefore Türkiye has started to adopt different policies and targets. However Türkiye has adopted these policies much later then the EU.

The aforementioned situation brought the question that whether Türkiye was too late for certain actions about environmental and climate policies such as delimitate the carbon emission rate or ratify the certain agreements like Paris Agreement. Also maybe the most important thing should to ask is that if compared with the EU, where does Türkiye stand

on these problems. Is it possible for Türkiye to achieve its targets with the current policies? To answer this question, first of all, it has been tried to summarize what is environmental and climate policies in general. For that, official documents were examined. Later on, it has been tried to explain that the background of these policies and applications to these policies in the EU. While doing so, also, it has been used official documents and countries' decisions. And finally it has been looked the research question's possible answers to find out Türkiye's place of this issue. For that it has been used formal documents, again. Thus, the method has been chosen as document analysis.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES OF THE EU**

Environment and climate come one of the most significant topics in the field. As a sub-field of environmental problems and because of the climatic deterioration, climate and related terms are more known and popular. However, these are generally neglected topics. These problems are common and they don't belong to some specific state or company. Each day, states and companies adopt and put into effect many target roadmaps. But when it comes to the policy practices most of them are failing. The EU has started many ambitious initiatives against environmental problems and more specifically climate change.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

EU is concentrated not only economic, cultural, and political fields, but also environmental and climate fields. One of the biggest reasons of this is that environmental degradation occurs as a result of economic growth. In order to ensure the continuity of activities outside the environment, it is important to protect the environment (Yaman and Gül, 2016: 199).

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With the Treaty of Paris, the six states established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. Therefore, the EU was established as an economy based organization. Their main purpose was to grow up in economic way. In the 1957, with the Treaty of Rome, European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) were formed. There were no provisions or commitments regarding environmental policies in the Treaties of Paris and Rome. However, within the framework of EURATOM, it is possible to say that with the decision about a system which controls the peaceful use of nuclear energy indirectly pays attention to environmental security of humanity (Talu, 2013: 190).

In the 1964, EEC and EURATOM were combined and become the European Community (EC). Until the 1970s, the environmental issues were still not considered a major topic. In 1972, Stockholm Conference was held within the body of the United Nations (UN), and the UN Environment Program was formed for the first time at this conference. This was an important step because it can be considered as a pioneer initiative for common environmental policies. After the Conference, Club of Rome prepared the report called "The Limits to Growth".

Club of Rome asks a question based on 5 variables in its report. If the rapid population growth, food production, industrialization rate, environmental pollution level and the rate of depletion of natural resources continue to progress at this level, what future awaits the economy in the next century? It is stated that if the growth trend continues as it is today, the economic growth in the world will reach the limit within 100 years and an uncontrollable decline will begin to occur. Club of Rome gives a proposal called "zero growth". It is stating that the industrialization and development of third world countries will not be met by the world's natural and economic resource potential. They plan to limit growth by pointing out the resilience to hunger and poverty, especially in underdeveloped

countries. Thus, it is assumed that the natural environment order will be protected and the pollution problem will be prevented (EY, 2022). That report formed the basis of the Europe's environmental policies (Yaman and Gül, 2016: 203).

In the same year with the Stockholm Conference, the EC started to form Environmental Action Plans (EAP) to produce EC's environmental policies officially. However, environmental policies become primary policy area after the Single Act, came to force in 1 July 1987. With the Single Act, for the first time the environmental policies are included to the founding treaty of the Community.

With the Single Act, the second article of the Treaty of Rome has been expended with the "protection of environment". Also, the legal framework of the Common Environmental Policy has been drawn in the provisions covered in Article 25 and under the Title 7. Therefore, the environment was included the Community's acquis. Based on this, it was foreseen that Community shall the following policies (Sezgin, 2011: 135):

- to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment,
- to contribute towards protecting human health,
- to ensure a prudent and rational utilization of natural resources.

With The Single Act, some norms such as protection of air and water quality, control and management of wastes, protection of flora, fauna and landscape, control of chemicals and limitation of noise were accepted (Aydın and Çamur, 2017: 31). Between 1973 and 1985, 120 directives, 27 decisions and 14 regulations have been published. Total publications show that the environment was the fastest growing policy area in the EC in this period (Duru, 2007: 2-3).

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The Single Act has led to an increase in environmental legislation day by day. In 1993, the EC turned into the European Union (EU) with the Treaty of Maastricht. One of the basic conditions being a “union” is to be in harmony as much as possible on many issues. Therefore, protection of the environment has officially entered into the EU’s policy area. With the Treaty of Maastricht, a common approach has been adopted across the Europe.

In the Treaty, the targets of protection of the environment clearly have stated as the EU’s aims. Also, it has been underlined that the protection of the environment shall be in a harmony with the economic policies. In addition, the two concepts, sustainable development and subsidiarity, have been mentioned in the Treaty for the first time. In the Treaty of Maastricht the following has been adopted (Talu, 2013: 192):

- a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment
- principle of subsidiarity,
- a policy on the environment,
- environmental protection shall require to integration into the definition and implementation of other Community policies.

The Treaty of Maastricht has led to the environmental policies to be part of EU’s “common jurisdiction”. According to the EU rules, about the topics into the “common jurisdiction”, member states can take decisions about that topic, if the EU has no decision on that specific issue. However, if the EU has taken a decision on that issue, it will be above the member states’ decisions and binding for member states. For this reason, the environmental policies are binding for the EU countries.

With the Amsterdam Summit in 1997, within the scope of the enlargement of the EU countries, the principle of sustainable development has been added with the amendment made in the agreement. This was one of the most significant steps for the environmental policies. With the Treaty, environment and employment topics have gained a new perspective and acceleration in the EU. Some adopted approaches were included to the “Agenda 2000” published in 1997. In this report, the EU’s environmental and enlargement policies are discussed together. Also with the report, the EU’s environmental policies related 21st century were also discussed (Talu, 2013: 195).

Other important milestone for EU’s sustainable development policies is Cardiff Process. In 1998, with the meeting held in Cardiff, Wales, this Process has been started and last until 2002 with many meetings. In this period, environmental integration was highlighted especially in the energy, agriculture, and transportation sectors.

After many Council meeting and decisions, “A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development” was accepted in May 2001. With that Strategy, concrete actions have been defined in the fields such as climate change, protection of biological diversity, interaction of environment and health policies, and dangerous chemicals. Also, in 2001 on the Goteborg Summit, the sustainability debate was addressed at the highest policy level.

In Treaty of Nice, signed in 2001, within the framework of environmental policies, especially the use of water resources were the priority. This was also important for potential member countries such as Türkiye because it is a water rich country. To sum up, within the framework of “A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development”, energy and sustainable development, protection of water resources, land use and protection of biological diversity policies highlighted for the sustainable management of natural resources (Talu, 2013: 195).

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In 2000, the EU came up with the “Lisbon Strategy”. In the Strategy it has been stated that people should be at the centre of policies. To invest in people, it can be ensured an active welfare state. Interim evaluation in 2005, it was determined that the targets set could not be achieved. After this failure, the “2020 Strategic Plan”, which is thought to carry the Lisbon Strategies further, has been put forward. It will be mentioned about 2020 Strategic Plan later on.

The EU felt the need to change in its policies at the end of the 2000s. 21st century requirements pushed the EU to change its economic, politic, and social policies. On one hand it was trying to maintain current situation, but on the other hand it was needed a new structuring to handle about global challenge such as climate change, demographic transitions, energy security, and fighting terrorism as well as the enlargement in the future (Talu, 2013: 195).

Because of this approach, in 2007, the Treaty of Lisbon was signed. But it came into force in 2009 due to some ratification process. With the Treaty of Lisbon, the Treaty of Rome, founding treaty of the old Community, has been revised. The Treaty of Lisbon, the EU has gained international legal entity, accelerated decision making process, turned the corporate structure more effective, and increased its mobility in foreign policy (Talu, 2013: 196).

With the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU abided the principles of high level protection of environment and to increase the quality of environment. It is given to the EU’s mandate to develop a provision against climate change at international level. The Treaty elevated environment protection to the status of an EU objective, stipulating that the EU member states must finance and implement environmental policy (Gioti-Papadaki, 2012: 153).



### ***EU ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMS (EAPS)***

Although there is no any obligation in the Treaty of Rome, environmental action programs prepared as a roadmap for the subsequent years for the first time in the 1973. These programs have no bindings for countries. However, programs state two important points: The programs set out the main principles of the policies to be followed throughout the Union and provide guidance for future legal arrangements (Duru, 2007: 5). The environmental policy put into practice with the First Environmental Action Program became an EU policy by adding the Single Act to the Treaty of Rome (Aydın and Çamur, 2017: 34). Each program covers 4-5year periods and prepared for the national and global solution of environmental problems. Seven programs have been put into practice so far.

### ***FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (1973-1976)***

This program enabled the discussion of environmental protection, welfare and economic development, which are in mutual interaction with each other (Hey, 2007: 9). This program includes following principles: The polluter pays, the rectification at source, consideration of the environment in planning/decision-making processes.

### ***SECOND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (1977-1981)***

This program was complementary to the previous one. The relationship between environmental issues and employment issues was emphasized. Environmental Impact Reports (EIA) was mentioned for the first time.

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### ***THIRD ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (1982-1987)***

In the third program, especially the “react and cure” and the “anticipate and prevent” principles after pollution were highlighted. In this context a comprehensive protection strategy about protection of the environment and natural resources was adopted. In any economic action in the agriculture, energy, industry, transportation and tourism sectors, it was emphasized that for a right economic growth environmental dimension must be considered. With the third program, “restorative” policies were come into force instead of “preventive” policies (Talu, 2013: 197). For example, rather than eliminating pollution, it is aimed to prevent the factors causing pollution before they occur.

### ***FOURTH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (1987-1992)***

This was the first action program after the Single Act. For this reason, the protection of environment has been considered as fundamental element of social and economic development. In this program, stricter environmental standards have been highlighted, like it has never highlighted in the previous programs. Especially, it has been adopted a balance between the energy use and environmental protection purposes. These approaches adopted for energy sectors include factors about fighting against climate change. From this point of view, we can say they the development of climate policies have been started with the Fourth Program.

### ***FIFTH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (1993-2000)***

The 5th Action Program bears the traces of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 and the Treaty of Maastricht adopted in the same year. This Program's motto has been "Towards Sustainability". The Program contains the following principles: Sustainable development, integrating environmental measures with other policy areas, making use of free market economy tools and ensuring the common participation of all actors in society. The Program addresses the environmental pressures of five key sectors: agriculture, transport, industry, tourism and energy (Duru, 2007: 37). Especially air pollution, acid rains, protection of water resources and natural resources, biological diversity and prevention of climate change were notable issues in this Program.

### ***SIXTH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (2001-2010)***

The motto of this Program has been "Our Future, Our Choice". Also it envisages taking more stringent measures in four priority areas: climate change, environment and health nature and biological diversity, and sustainable usage of natural resources and waste management (Sarıkaya, 2004: 4). It has been foreseen some structural changes in energy and transportation sectors of the EU. Within the framework of this Program, some strategic approaches have been adopted to achieve environmental targets. The following are the seven strategic areas: air pollution, sea environment, prevention and recycling of wastes, sustainable usage of resources, land, pesticide, and urban environment (Popeanga, 2013: 26).

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### ***SEVENTH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM (2013-2020)***

The motto of this this Program has been “Living Better within the Boundaries of the Planet”. The EU, which gives wide coverage to the environmental issue, has significantly decreased air, water and soil pollution as a result. Although it achieved previous targets, it was emphasized that the point reached in the program was insufficient. It was stated that problems can be overcome led by technological developments. In the program, which summarizes the priority targets to be made until 2020, long-term decisions until 2050 are stated.

In addition, the European Environment Agency (EEA) was established in 1994. It was provided significant opportunities for raising social awareness across the EU, as well as providing current situation analyses on the topics covered by the EU Environmental Policy in the light of scientific data obtained from both member and non-member countries.

To sum up, the main theme of the first four environmental action Programs was “prevention of pollution”; the fifth one’s was “sustainable development and responsibility sharing”; the sixth one’s was “Environment 2020 is our future choice”; and the seventh one’s was “Living Better within the Boundaries of the Planet”. Especially with the Fifth Environmental Program, climate policies have gained importance.

### ***HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CLIMATE POLICIES OF THE EU***

The first step taken against climate change on an international scale was the Stockholm Conference in 1972. It was held within the body of UN and the UN Environment Program was formed for the first time at this conference. This was an important step because it can be considered

as a pioneer initiative for common environmental policies. Then, the “First World Climate Conference” organized by the World Meteorological Organization was held in 1979, where issues related to global climate were discussed for the first time in the international arena. Another step and the more important one was the “Second World Climate Conference” organized by the World Meteorological Organization in 1990 (Altunok and Altunok, 2013: 46).

In 1990, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was accepted. The ultimate objective of the Convention was highlighted as “to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system.” (UNFCCC, 2022).

Under the Convention, leaders decided to balance their greenhouse gas emissions until 2000 compared to 1990. Also in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, “Agenda 21” was accepted. “Agenda 21” was a non-binding action plan of the UN on sustainable development. It aimed to achieve global sustainable development by 2000 at local, national, and global levels. The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994.

Development of climate policies in the EU started with International Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) first report in 1990. The report noted that climate change is a challenge that could have global ramifications. It also stressed the need for international cooperation. And it initiated formal negotiations to create an international agreement on climate change. The EU, with its own CO2 emission reduction target set in 1990s in the Luxemburg and Environment and Energy Council (Talu, 2019: 13), has been in an early and powerful position in the development of global climate policies. The EU was signed this Agenda 21 and Convention (İktisadi Kalkınma Vakti, 2017: 9).

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### **KYOTO PROTOCOL (1997)**

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997 as the implementation tool of the Convention in order to strengthen the countries' fulfillment of their obligations regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Within the framework of the Protocol, the EU regulates %8 reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to carbon dioxide from human sources for between 2008 and 2012, compared with 1990 levels. Because of the differentiation of the economic growth among member states of the EU, a different emission reduction target has been set for each member state. The Kyoto Protocol was ratified by the assemblies of the EU members in 2002 (Türkeş and Kılıç, 2003). Also 10 other states, who wait to become member of the EU (Czech Republic, Estonia, South Cyprus, Poland, Malta, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia) accepted this Protocol in 2004. And their emission aims was between %6-%8.

EU has succeeded its aims about reduction of greenhouse gas emissions within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol between 1990 and 2012. The EU has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by %18.

After 2008, eve the impact of 2008 Economic Crisis couldn't stop the EU for its fight against climate change. In 2010, the most destructive year of the Crisis, "Strategy 2020" was adopted. This Strategy also called "20-20-20 Targets". The Strategy is aimed to enable the economies of member countries to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Erdoğan, 2018). According to the Strategy (EC, 2022):

- %20 cut in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels),
- %20 of EU energy from renewables (from 1990 levels),
- %20 improvement in energy efficiency (from 1990 levels).

In the present, greenhouse gas emission in the EU decreased by 31% between 1990 and 2020 which means it reached/achieved its 2020 climate targets. Also some data shows that the ratio of renewable energy in the EU reached by 19%. However, it is foreseen that necessary steps have not been taken to realize the target of 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020.

The first commitment period of Kyoto Protocol was covering between 2008 and 2012 and it was mainly about reduction of six main greenhouse gasses namely carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride. In 2012, Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol was accepted. With the Doha Amendment for the period of 2013-2020 has been determined as the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Therefore an emission reduction target of 18% relative to 1990 levels has been set for all parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

### **PARIS AGREEMENT (2016)**

After the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement which sets the framework for the post-2020 climate change regime has entered into force (accepted by UN). The EU signed the Agreement on 22 April 2016 and ratified it on 5 October 2016. The agreement will be valid until 2030. The main purpose of the Agreement was to ensure that the increase in global average temperature does not exceed 2°C (even 1.5°C).

The differentiation between the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement is that the targets will be determined by the parties. With this feature, the contract is legally binding on the signatory states but not completely binding. Only some reporting parts are binding. On the other hand it is based on the voluntary participation of signatory states (Erdoğan, 2018: 707-708). While the Convention demands a constantly

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increasing effort from the signatory states; on the other hand, it leaves the signatory states free to determine the commitments they will make every five years (Schreurs, 2016: 220) such as determine the greenhouse gas emission rates. This fundamental different may be the good opportunity for states fulfilling their commitments. However, it is clearly seen that states are far away from their 2 degree targets about temperature.

### **EUROPE 2030 TARGETS AND 2050 ROADMAP**

Some future targets were also determined. For 2030 the following were the targets (EC, 2022):

- At least %40 cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels),
- At least %32 share for renewable energy (from 1990 levels),
- At least %32.5 improvement in energy efficiency (from 1990 levels).

For 2050 Roadmap, the ultimate goal was to provide an independent, objective, and practical analysis of pathways to reach a low-carbon economy in Europe, in the light of the environmental, energy security, and economic goals of the EU (Roadmap 2050, 2022). The Roadmap 2050 is an initiative of the European Climate Foundation (ECF). It is important to remind that to achieve 2050 Roadmap, firstly 2030 targets must be achieved. In addition to all, the “White Paper on the Future of Europe”, which is prepared by European Commission in 2017, has been published.

According to the White Paper, the EU’s leading role in implementation of the targets of Paris Agreement on fight against climate change will continue. The Paper is stated that the EU27 is shaping the current agenda in many fields such as climate, financial stability, and sustainable development.



### **GREEN DEAL (2019)**

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, announced the Green Deal for the first time in 2019. After she realized that climate policies were insufficient in the Europe, she has decided to reconsider the climate targets, which are determined before for 2030 and 2050. With the Green Deal, she has clearly announced her target: to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. So she has aimed to upraise the Europe from low-carbon level to the carbon-neutral level.

The Deal is not only focusing on 2050 target, but also it underlines the need to set more ambitious commitments for 2030. It has revealed that the EU aims to raise the EU's 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target to at least 50% or even 55% (İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı, 2017: 11). A year later, at the Leaders' Summit held on 11-12 December 2020, the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by %55 in 2030 compared to 1990 was accepted by all member countries.

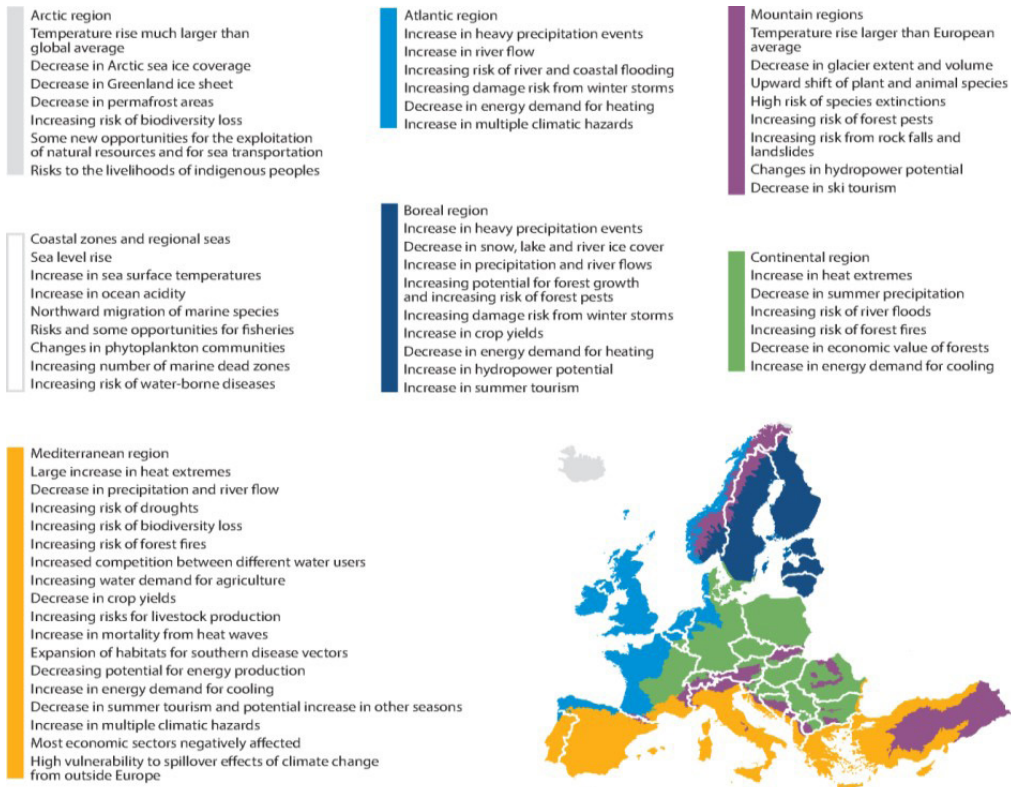
Although there were some criticisms about these targets, this was a big step for the EU for its being the first climate-neutral continent. In addition, on March 4, 2020, the EU shared with the public its first proposal on the Climate Law. The Climate Law is one of the key elements of the Green Deal. The law aims to make the climate neutrality target legally binding by integrating it into the EU legislation (İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı, 2017: 12).

After the Leaders' Summit on 11-12 December 2020, on 17 December 2020, a general approach to the Climate Law was agreed. On July 9 2021, the EU published Regulation 2021/1119 (called the Climate Law), which enshrines in law the EU's objective of becoming climate neutral by 2050, and the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least %55 by 2030. This is also called "Fit for 55 Package", which is announced by von der Leyen. The Climate Law entered into force within 20 days following publication.

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The biggest reason of why the EU tries so hard for its climate regulations is because that the EU will be one of the most vulnerable continents affected by the climate change. Especially after the June-July 2019, the EU realised that there is a disaster coming. In 2019 summer, most of the European countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Portugal have experienced the hottest June and July for the first time. Moreover, the possibility of the forthcoming summers in Europe being as hot as the one in June-July 2019 due to climate changes.

**Picture 1:** Possible Impacts of the Climate Change in Europe



**Source:** Possible Impacts of the Climate Change in Europe. (2020). Map, European Environment Agency.

This figure shows the possible impacts of the climate change to Europe. As it can be seen from the figure, different sub-regions of the EU will be affected by climate change. Especially countries in the Mediterranean Basin will be affected most. The impacts will be not only natural, but also moral, economic, social. And as a Mediterranean Basin country, Türkiye is one of the most vulnerable countries of the Europe.

### **TÜRKİYE'S POSITION AND APPLICATIONS TO THE EU ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES**

It is very significant for Türkiye to adopt highly ambitious climate policies. As it mentioned above, Türkiye is a country in Mediterranean Basin. Because of this reason, it must follow ambitious environmental and climate policies.

### ***HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TÜRKİYE'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES***

Türkiye encountered environmental concepts for the first time in the 1970s, just like the EU. For a while, environmental policies always stayed in the background. The first provisions on the protection of the environment took place in the Article 56 of the Constitution of 1982 entitled "Health services and protection of the environment". According to the Article 56, "Everyone has the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment. It is government and people's responsibility to develop environment, protect environment health, and prevent the pollution." (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 1982) This Law indicates a constitutional regulation of the right of environment. Before this Law, protection of the environment was generally put into practice by several ministers and institutions in accordance with their field of interests.

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On the other hand, Environment Law No. 2872 published on 9 August 1983 is known as the first environmental law entered into force in Türkiye. The General Directorate of Environment, which was subsequently established on 8 June 1984, was put in charge of implementing the Environment Law. Since then, several regulations and directives have continued to enter in to force.

The National Environmental Strategy and Action Program is very important in shaping Türkiye's environmental policies. This Program is the first "action plan" focusing on a specific issue in Türkiye (Yıldırım and Budak, 2005: 201). It is possible to say that the Program, which is published in 1998, bears similarities with the 5th Environment Action Program of the EU. It has five main purposes: Prevention and reduction of pollution, make easier for people to access environment infrastructure and services, promoting the sustainable use of renewable resources, development of programs and recommendations, and reduce the exposure of the environment to natural and human-based risks (Yoğurtçuoğlu, 1999: 1-8).

After the approval of Türkiye's candidacy to the EU with the Helsinki Summit in 1999, many policies had a new dimension. A year later, in 2000, Türkiye-EU signed Association Agreement. In 2001, Turkish National Program for the Adoption of the European Union Acquis prepared by Türkiye is accepted. This National Program has started harmonization efforts on environmental field, as well as other sectors (Sarıkaya, 2004: 4). Also, in 2003, some changes were made. These developments are the framework of the Türkiye's environmental policies.

Also as another important step, Türkiye became a party to the UNFCCC in 2004. Türkiye's EU membership goal may have an important role of behind this decision. Compared with other countries, Türkiye signed the UNFCCC late. Because it was in both ANNEX-1 (list of advanced industrialized countries) and ANNEX-2 (list of developing countries) lists at the same time. As a member of the Organisation for Economic

Cooperation and Development (OECD), Türkiye was in the status of developing countries. So it couldn't be in both lists. Therefore it refrained from signing the convention.

Türkiye's EU candidacy has been one of the most significant elements, which helped to shape its environmental policies (Bostanoğlu, 2020: 6). After 2003 changes, there wasn't any major development on environment. In 2009, the accession negotiations on the "Environment and Climate Change" chapter started between Türkiye and the EU. According to the accession negotiations, Türkiye has continued its efforts to harmonise its environmental legislation to the EU's environmental acquis in the fields such as air quality, water quality, environmental protection, waste management, industrial pollution, chemicals, noise and most importantly climate change (Bostanoğlu, 2020: 6).

Especially with the 2000s, almost every environmental policy has been started to shape under the climate change. Because of the extreme temperature, melting glaciers, etc., climate change has become a priority for all countries. That's why Türkiye also has started to adopt climate-based policies. On the other hand the EU membership target and international pressure has played a big role in this decision because Türkiye was among the countries which has the greenhouse gas emission more rather than other countries, and it was increasing day by day. In 2010, in order to fight against climate change Türkiye published the "Climate Change Strategy 2010-2023", which set forth climate actions to be realised in short, middle and long-term.

After a while Türkiye has released the "Climate Change Action Plan" and the "National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan" for the timetable of 2011-2023 (Bostanoğlu, 2020: 13). Climate Change Action Plan aimed to improve in several action areas such as buildings, transport, industry, waste, land use and forestry and adaptation to climate

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change. On the other hand National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan aimed to defining objectives for controversial issues in adaption (Bostanođlu, 2020: 13).

In 2018, Türkiye has also published its “7th National Communication”. The Communication put forward Türkiye’s current policies and actions in order to fight against climate change, and also underlined its commitment to the Paris Agreement (Bostanođlu, 2020: 13). Also in the same year, in the context of 7th National Communication the “2018-2022 Strategy Document” was published by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization.

### **TÜRKİYE’S POSITION ON KYOTO PROTOCOL AND PARIS AGREEMENT**

Türkiye was not among the first countries which have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Because Türkiye was in both ANNEX-I and ANNEX-II groups which is classified in the UNFCCC. ANNEX-I is composed of developed countries and ANNEX-II is composed of developing countries and they had different obligations from each other, as it is mentioned above. This classification also gives different technical and financial responsibilities to the groups, even though they don’t have the same economic growth. For this reason, it became a party to the Kyoto Protocol on 26 August 2009; however it didn’t accept any emission reduction commitments.

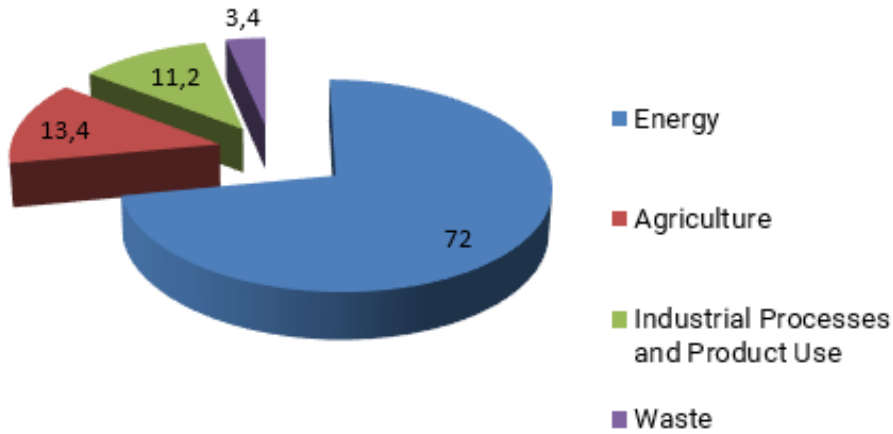
As a milestone for fight against climate change, the Paris Agreement is significant. With the Agreement its parties have common but differentiated responsibilities. This is one of the basic differences between the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

Türkiye is one of the signatory countries of the Agreement. According to Türkiye’s commitments, its target was pledged up to %21 reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions from the Business as Usual level by

2030. However, Türkiye had been criticised by severally for its targets are “critically insufficient” compared with the Paris Agreement’s goals on keep the temperature below 1.5°C. At the end of the day, it can be clearly seen that Türkiye is far away from to succeed its commitments. According to TURKSTAT (TÜİK), greenhouse gas emissions have increased %137.5 in 2018, compared to 1990 levels (In 2019, it is 3% lower compared with 2018) (TÜİK, 2018).

**Picture 2:** Ratio of Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sectors (2019)

### Ratio of Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sectors (2019)



**Source:** Ratio of Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sectors. (2019). Schema, TURKSTAT.

As it can be clearly seen from the table, energy sector is sharing the biggest part of the greenhouse gas emission, which is 72%. This means Türkiye has a high dependency on energy. So it must make decisions about energy dependency first and it must invest to this field and technology.

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At the beginning Türkiye didn't ratify the Paris Agreement. However, on 7 September 2021, Türkiye ratified the Agreement (T.C. Çevre, Şehircilik ve İklim Değişikliği Bakanlığı, 2022). It has stated to rearrange its commitments on greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, Türkiye is changed the name of "Ministry of Environment and Urbanization" to the "Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change" on 29 September, 2021. Also Türkiye has put a new target for itself, "net zero emission by 2053." (TRT Haber, 2022).

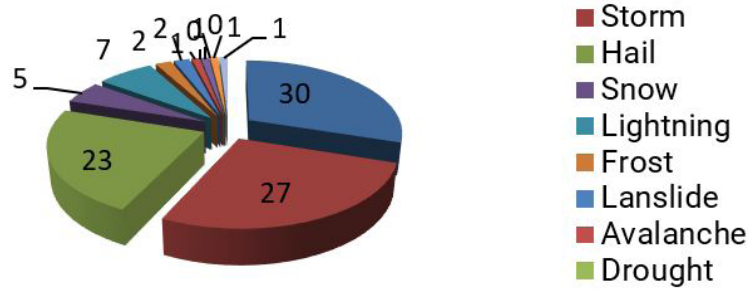
However one the biggest problem is that "net zero emission by 2053" seems little unrealistic. That target claims that Turkey will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions more than its usage. More clearly, if Türkiye increases its greenhouse gas emission in the next year, the reduction will be occur over that numbers. For instance, let's consider that Türkiye's greenhouse gas emissions reach to 900 million tonnes. In that scenario the reduction will be over this tonnage. How realistic is that?

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

As already mentioned above, Türkiye is a country located in the Mediterranean Basin. This is why it is highly vulnerable to climate change. In recent years Türkiye is already started to see the impact of environmental and climate problems. For instance, in 2021, forest fires are extremely increased; storms and other natural disasters as well. Of course, it would not be right to attribute these extreme events only to environmental and climate problems. However, these problems are one of the biggest indicators of these extreme events. The graphic below shows percentages of extreme events in Türkiye in 2020.



**Picture 3:** Percentages of Extreme Events (2020)



**Source:** (Percentages of Extreme Events, Schema, Turkish State Meteorological Service, 2021)

As it can be seen from the table, Türkiye is among the most vulnerable countries from heavy rain/flood and storm. Especially irregular heavy rains are on the top of the list. In the table, forest fires can be seen less than many extreme events. But these are 2020's numbers. It can be easily said that in 2021, there has not been any radical changes. In 2021, Türkiye had suffered from forest fires a lot. And one of the biggest reasons of this is that climate change because trees can burn faster by drying.

Türkiye was one of the biggest carbon dioxide emitters in the Europe (Statista, 2022). So, it has to take steps to comply with its transition into a green economy in the framework of The Green Deal. This must be priority of Türkiye. As a newly industrialised country, Türkiye's greenhouse gas emission trend has gotten higher since 1990, in contrast to the decreasing trend of the EU. This might be a problematic in the future. Because the EU aims to transform and restructure its economy completely green. Since Türkiye is the biggest "trade partner" of the EU, it won't want to lose its position.

What should Türkiye do is, for example, to invest renewable energy more. Türkiye has great potential for solar power. Especially the west and south coast's provinces of Türkiye have great opportunity for solar energy. However it does not turn it into an advantage. Türkiye produces electricity

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from solar power less than its capacity. On the other hand some provinces are quite suitable for wind power. But, again, Türkiye has no wind power technology and couple facilities in western Türkiye produce so little.

After ratifying the Paris Agreement, investment in renewable energy was among the priority targets for Türkiye in the framework of the Agreement. The biggest problem in making these investments is that the cost is quite high. Türkiye must give more budgets for renewable energy projects and support the investments.

Especially after the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2021 Türkiye started to adopt a few important decisions. For example, the scope of existing supports such as tax exemption and customs duty exemption for wind and solar energy investments has been expanded. In order for a sector to take place in the global market, it must first be preferred in its own country and it must be used in its own country. The incentives are important in this point however, it is not enough and must be increase.

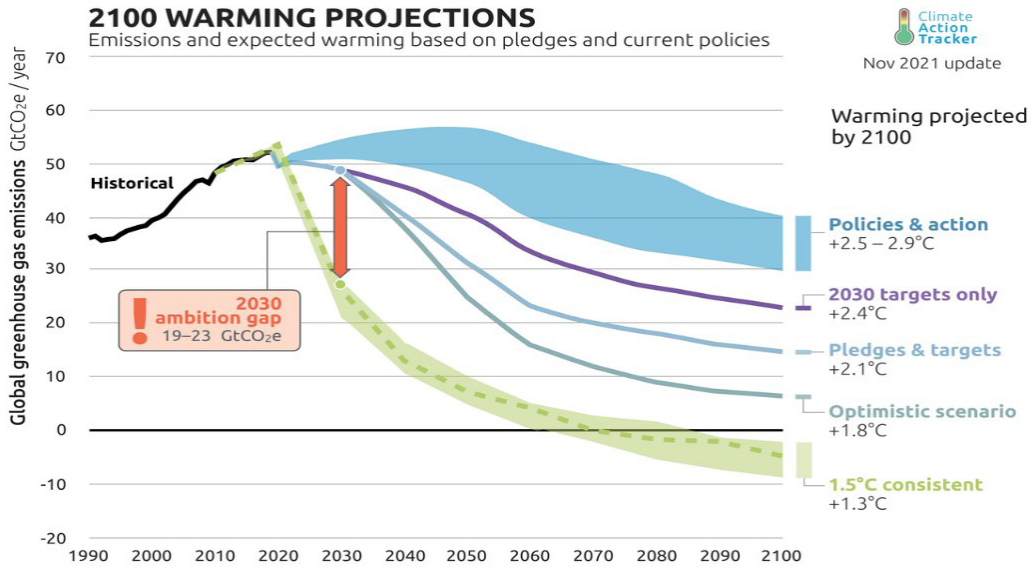
As a suggestion for Türkiye, for example, a transition to renewable energy can be achieved in any government agency and it must be mandatory. The transition must start from the state agencies first. Then, in the case of private sectors, for example, factories may be required to produce a significant portion of their electricity from renewable sources.

A short time ago, Türkiye made plastic bags used in grocery shopping for a fee. At first, with this restriction for plastic bags, usage decreased by %75 (T.C. Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı, 2022). But this was a small step. Türkiye has to do more than that.

The EU has already started to take radical decisions on environment and being carbon-neutral. For instance Denmark stated that it will make domestic flights fossil fuel free by 2030 (BBC, 2022a). In France, a new law banning plastic packaging for fruit and vegetables comes to force

(BBC, 2022b). Also after a while Spain announced that it will ban of plastic packaging for fruits and vegetables (Food Packaging Group, 2022). Germany has determined a new target on climate-neutrality: being carbon-neutral by 2045 (the EU's current target 2050) (Die Bundesregierung, 2022). Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, has been chosen as "European Green Capital" for 2023. Tallinn had a history of polluting heavy industries. But it has demonstrated high progress and made radical changes in domestic life-style. Now it has big green fields and bike paths (Tallinn, 2022). These examples are just very current ones.

**Picture 4:** 2100 Warming Projections Based on Pledges and Current Policies



**Source:** 2100 Warming Projections, Schema. (2021). Climate Action Tracker.

But are these enough for to keep the temperature under 1.5°C? According to the Climate Action Tracker, it is not possible to keep the temperature under 1.5°C with pledges and current policies. The table above shows the possible scenario by 2100. Even the states can make

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their 2030 targets the temperature rise 2.4°C. With the pledges and targets it still rise 2.1°C. Even with the optimistic scenario the temperature still rises 1.8°C, which is still more than 1.5°C.

The story is same for all countries. Current targets and policies are not enough for fighting against environmental degradation and climate change. According to the Climate Change Performance Index, none of the countries achieved their targets to prevent dangerous climate change. Even the first country of the list, Denmark, couldn't achieve the position which is committed through its targets (CCPI, 2022).

### CONCLUSION

With the 1960s, environmental issues have started to increase. One of the main reasons of environmental degradation was economic growth. In the following years it has started to become spillover more rapidly. With the 2000s, climate change dependent on environmental degradation has become initial problem for the World. The global temperature has increased high levels and the bells started to ring for all world. The EU has determined radical targets and commitments against fighting environmental issues and specifically climate change. The EU has taken many decisions and signed many agreements etc. At the end of the day Ursula von der Leyen, The Head of the Commission, has stated its targets about being climate-neutral continent by 2050 and this commitment has become priority.

In the meantime Türkiye also started to feel the negative effects of environmental degradation and climate change. But Türkiye was late to taking radical decisions on these issues. However, in recent years, especially after ratification of the Paris Agreement, it has taken many

decisions and published its national commitments. But the reports show that Türkiye has failed to achieve its commitments. Because Türkiye has so much dependency to energy, especially fossil fuel, and energy sector is the biggest reason of the climate change.

Although Türkiye has stated some targets, it is far away from reaching these targets. The main purpose of Türkiye's Climate Action Plans in the global fight against climate change was to work in cooperation with international parties to prevent climate change, which is the common concern of humanity. That means it should be in touch with many parties to be able to achieve its commitments. The EU countries have already begun to make laws on being carbon-neutral. And in the very near future, for example, it will not import non-green products. As a biggest trade partner of the EU, Türkiye will have to change its economy, trade, energy to green. For this to happen, Türkiye will be needed to invest to high-tech, infrastructure, related sectors etc. When we look at the time we live in, unfortunately Türkiye seems very far from this.

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