

The ecology and environment ministers of seven European countries met in Paris on 25 April and called for a more ambitious climate strategy for the EU. EURACTIV.fr reports. Brune Poirson, the secretary of state to the French minister for ecological transition, and her counterparts from Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Portugal and Luxembourg met in Paris and came to a similar conclusion: we must take more action and we must take it faster.

At the COP21 in Paris in 2015, member states had agreed to limit global warming to 'well below 2°C', to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. However, with the EU's current climate policy these goals will not be achieved.

"The current policy is not enough, we are now heading to a 3°C or 3.5°C rise," said Eva Svedling, Swedish Secretary of State for Climate Action. "Climate should be at the centre of politics."

Carbon price floor, emissions trading schemes, coal and nuclear exit, all these issues show that member states are still divided on climate policy. This is why France wants to take the lead and start a small coalition of climate ambitious countries.

"We don't want to be an isolated group, far ahead of everyone else. We will ensure a balance," said Brune Poirson, who calls for all member states to be involved.

Since his election, French President Emmanuel Macron has put climate and energy issues at the heart of European politics, however, the EU does not seem to follow. For example, in the multiannual financial framework, climate and environmental protection are not listed among the EU's priorities for the coming decade.

Asked about the implementation of a carbon price floor at the European level (originally a French idea), Poirson stated: "Under the framework of the ETS, the carbon price does not send a strong enough signal, the price isn't high enough. Therefore, France suggests putting a floor price for the energy industry. These are small steps, but a Europe-wide movement is emerging."

"The EU needs an ambitious goal for 2050 and a strategy to achieve it and we are eager to contribute to this work. The EU's emission trading scheme must remain the cornerstone of our climate policy and should be further strengthened and broadened to fulfil this role," said the Finnish Environment Minister Kimmo Tiilikainen.

According to Poirson, the purpose of the meeting was to define a strategy to bring European countries together, along with aligning the 2030 goals with the longer term goals of the Paris Agreement.

"Today we showed our will to fight for climate action, and our will to fight for a carbon

neutrality goal. The aim was to make sure we are on the right track by drawing up steps before 2050," she said.

Poirson also stated that the COP24, the UN's climate conference which will take place from 3-14 December, is a key step. "All eyes will be on Europe, especially since this year it will take place in Poland."

"We urge all other European countries to join this coalition, make the Paris Agreement a reality and align EU policies with the ambition to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C," said Wendel Trio, director of Climate Action Network Europe.

In a report published by two consulting firms specialising on climate, Climact and the New Climate Institute, findings suggest that political will, rather than technical issues, is to blame for blocking progress towards ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals. "It will be easy to put together a policy based on best practices for implementation by the EU member states," the authors of the report said.

Source: euractiv.com