



**SOCIAL WATCH**  
CZECH REPUBLIC

**CZECH REPUBLIC 2020:  
CHAOTIC CZECH CLIMATE  
POLITICS ARE NOT  
BRINGING US CLOSER TO  
FULFILLING THE GOALS OF  
THE PARIS AGREEMENT;  
QUITE THE OPPOSITE.**

2020 MONITORING REPORT ON PARIS AGREEMENT FULFILMENT BY  
SOCIAL WATCH AND KLIMATICKÁ KOALICE (CLIMATE COALITION)



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# Introduction

*Michaela Pixova – editor*

Our current civilization could have emerged only thanks to suitable climatic conditions which arose with the end of the last ice age about 10 000 years ago. A stable and favourable climate enabled people to settle, build settlements, engage in agriculture, and develop technically and culturally. Approximately 200 years ago, the discovery that it was possible to obtain energy through burning fossil fuels led to an industrial revolution, to a further acceleration of technical progress, and to a huge increase in the world's population as well.

However, in discovering the effects of fossil fuel combustion on the chemical and physical composition of the atmosphere, this human evolutionary path has proven to be a dead end. As early as the 19th century, the role of carbon dioxide – a product of combustion – on the Earth's greenhouse effect, which traps heat from the sun, was described along with the hypothesis that human activity could have an effect on the climate. By the middle of the 20th century, measurements had already shown that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was actually increasing due to the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, and, in the 1980s, signs of global warming began to appear.

The threat of catastrophic climate change subsequently resulted in efforts by the United Nations to promote climate protection as one of the key objectives of international cooperation. The year 1988 therefore saw the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in which scientists from around the world assess the development, impacts, and mitigation options of climate change. In 1992, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change became the basis of international climate policy, whose parties, including Czech Republic, meet at an annual conference to assess progress in addressing this global threat. Following the dysfunctional Kyoto Protocol<sup>1</sup>, adopted in 1997 to set greenhouse gas emission limits on advanced industrialized countries exclusively, the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, requiring all countries, including developing nations, to set their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – a necessary condition in achieving the main objective of the agreement. This is to keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 °C.<sup>2</sup> The signatories, including Czech Republic, agreed to the content of the Paris Agreement, 'recognizing the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge'.

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1 Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Prague: Ministry of the Environment. Available at: [https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/kjotsky\\_protokol/\\$FILE/OMV-cesky\\_protokol-20081120.pdf](https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/kjotsky_protokol/$FILE/OMV-cesky_protokol-20081120.pdf)

2 Paris Agreement. Prague: Ministry of the Environment. Available at: [https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/parizska\\_dohoda/\\$FILE/OEOK-Cesky\\_preklad\\_dohody-20160419.pdf](https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/parizska_dohoda/$FILE/OEOK-Cesky_preklad_dohody-20160419.pdf)

Despite many years of efforts by some prominent political leaders to deny the anthropogenic cause of the changing climate, on 4 November 2017, Czech Republic joined the vast majority of countries in ratifying the Paris Agreement. The agreement has thus become binding to the country. In December 2019, Czech Republic even joined the European Union's common goal of achieving climate neutrality as a whole by 2050, i.e., producing only as much greenhouse gas as we can capture from the atmosphere (either via natural processes or new technologies).

In contrast to the contractual agreements, however, Czech climate policy is very incomprehensible (see the Social Watch 2020 national report<sup>3</sup>). In particular, Prime Minister Babiš often claims something different at home than what he formally commits to at the European and international level. Perhaps he anticipates his voters' concerns about changes related to consistent climate protection, ignoring the fact that the population is at least as afraid of climate change itself. At the same time, the Czech government is under the influence of the industrial, energy and agrarian lobbies, to whom a non-exploitative approach to the environment and a vision of long-term sustainability do not appear to be economically advantageous. That is also why it is failing to meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement in most key respects. As much as 43 % of the electricity in Czech Republic comes from lignite-fired power plants, and, in terms of emissions, the country is one of the five largest polluters in Europe and the ten largest in the world.<sup>4</sup> A shift did not occur until the protests of the student movement Fridays for Future, to which the government responded by setting up the Coal Commission to decide upon a deadline for a coal phase-out in Czech Republic. The composition of the commission, the scenarios considered and all associated policies and government steps have not yet proved more considerable ambitions in Czech Republic's efforts to prevent catastrophic warming in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement also identifies three key areas in which changes are needed, with respect to making the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the overall transformation of our society not only effective but also sustainable and socially just. They mainly include the necessity of setting NDCs and ways of achieving them, but these must also be accompanied by the protection and further expansion of sinks, i.e., ecosystems capable of capturing and sequestering carbon. The transformation to climate neutrality must also be carried out in a socially sensitive and just way so that not all of the burden of the necessary change of our entire civilization is carried only by the most vulnerable groups – be it mining and energy workers or the inhabitants of the developing world – without sufficient resources to enable timely and effective mitigation and adaptation measures. All three areas and their fulfilment in Czech Republic are discussed in more detail in the report.

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3 Politicians Hinder Solutions Offered by Civil Society and Experts. Social Watch 2020 monitoring report. Available at: <http://www.socialwatch.cz/?p=1132>

4 Moldan, B., Pixová, M. (2020). Klimatická krize: Mýty a fakta o stavu planety. Available at: [https://klimatickakoalice.cz/images/Klimaticka\\_krize\\_-\\_mymyta\\_fakta\\_o\\_stavu\\_planety.pdf](https://klimatickakoalice.cz/images/Klimaticka_krize_-_mymyta_fakta_o_stavu_planety.pdf)

# Czech Republic's climate commitments and their fulfilment are insufficient and will not prevent 1.5 °C warming

*Jan Freidinger (Greenpeace CZ)*

The most up-to-date and reliable scientific findings related to the Paris Convention are summarized in the IPCC reports. The special IPCC<sup>1</sup> report from 2018 describes the difference between the effects of warming by 1.5 °C and 2 °C. The conclusions of scientists can be clearly interpreted as the need to contain warming to a maximum of 1.5 °C. There is an agreement around the 'specification' of the Paris Agreement objectives, and Czech Republic does not question this either. However, this report also provides thorough calculations and modelling as to how much greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced so that we do not exceed the 1.5 °C limit. Globally, it is necessary to reduce emissions by 45 % by 2030 – but compared to 2010 – and by 2050, the whole world must emit only as much carbon as our planet is able to store in spaces other than in the atmosphere.

In 2015, as part of meeting the objectives of the Paris Agreement, individual states submitted their voluntary contributions (Nationally Determined Contributions; NDCs) – that is, how much they will reduce their emissions so that the Earth does not warm by more than 2 °C and 1.5 °C, respectively. The EU Member States presented their commitment together and committed themselves to reducing emissions by 40 % by 2030 compared to 1990. Czechia is aiming to fulfil this commitment; however, if we compare this goal with the recommendation of the IPCC report, i.e., to reduce emissions by 45 % compared to 2010, it is quite clear that the current commitments of Czech Republic and of the European Union are completely insufficient to maintain warming not only below 1.5 °C, but even below 2 °C. The fact that the Czech climate policy is not in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement, among other things, is confirmed in a study by the scientific company Climate Analytics<sup>2</sup>, which calculated how fast the coal phase-out should be in order to achieve the goal of a maximum temperature increase of 1.5 °C. Together with other revelations, the calculations show that, without a rapid change in energy, Czech Republic will not meet the goals of the agreement in the future as it plans to mine and burn coal even after 2037. To meet the goals of the agreement, the use of coal will have to end by this time across the entire world. According to a new study, developed countries – including, of course, Czech Republic – must end coal use as early as 2031.

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1 Global warming of 1.5 °C: Summary for policymakers (2018). IPCC. Available at: [https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15\\_spm\\_final.pdf](https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf)

2 Global and regional coal phase-out requirements of the Paris Agreement: Insights from the IPCC Special Report on 1.5 °C (2019). Climate Analytics. Available at: [https://climateanalytics.org/media/report\\_coal\\_phase\\_out\\_2019.pdf](https://climateanalytics.org/media/report_coal_phase_out_2019.pdf)

The speed of the coal phase-out in Czech Republic will be indicated by the position of the Coal Commission, which is expected to submit its recommendation to the Czech government in the autumn of 2020. From the perspective of our obligations arising from the Paris Agreement, and with regard to the technological capabilities of Czech Republic, all lignite power plants should be shut down by 2030 and coal should stop being burnt in heating plants by 2035. The nearest possible date of a coal phase-out under consideration by the Coal Commission is 2035, which would only involve electricity generation, not heating. On the contrary, 2050 is also considered another possible deadline.

A rapid shift away from coal and other fossil fuels should go hand in hand with the development of clean renewable energy sources (RES). In this regard, Czech Republic is stagnating as well. The National Energy and Climate Plan of the Czech Republic, approved this year<sup>3</sup>, does not envisage the necessary development of sustainable RES, which are the fastest method of implementing solutions to replace fossil fuel combustion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Czech plan is among the weakest EU countries, and it proposes to increase the share of renewable energy sources to only 22 % of final consumption by 2030, although the potential of RESs in Czech Republic is much higher. This is shown in an analysis of Komora obnovitelných zdrojů energie<sup>4</sup> (KOZE; the Chamber of Renewable Energy Sources) or a study by Deloitte on the development of RESs by 2030, prepared for Svaz moderní energetiky (Modern Energy Union).<sup>5</sup> According to these analyses, Czech Republic has real potential to achieve a share of renewable sources in consumption by 2030 of at least 23.8 % (Deloitte) or 24.4 % (KOZE).

### Development of RES share in gross final consumption by industry (in %)

RES share in consumption	2016	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Electricity	13,6 %	13,4 %	13,8 %	14,1 %	14,5 %	14,8 %	15,2 %	15,5 %	15,7 %	16,1 %	16,4 %	16,9 %
Transport	6,4 %	8,8 %	7,8 %	8,1 %	8,6 %	9,0 %	9,5 %	10,2 %	11,2 %	12,1 %	13,1 %	14,0 %
Heating and Cooling	19,9 %	20,7 %	22,3 %	23,1 %	24,2 %	25,0 %	25,9 %	26,8 %	27,7 %	28,7 %	29,6 %	30,7 %
Total	14,9 %	15,6 %	16,5 %	17,0 %	17,7 %	18,2 %	18,7 %	19,3 %	19,9 %	20,6 %	21,2 %	22,0 %

Source: National Energy and Climate Plan of the Czech Republic, p. 30 [https://www.mpo.cz/assets/cz/energetika/strategicke-a-koncepcni-dokumenty/2020/1/Vnitrostani-plan-CR-v-oblasti-energetiky-a-klimatu\\_final.docx](https://www.mpo.cz/assets/cz/energetika/strategicke-a-koncepcni-dokumenty/2020/1/Vnitrostani-plan-CR-v-oblasti-energetiky-a-klimatu_final.docx)

3 National Energy and Climate Plan of the Czech Republic (2019). Available at: [https://www.mpo.cz/assets/cz/energetika/strategicke-a-koncepcni-dokumenty/2020/1/Vnitrostani-plan-CR-v-oblasti-energetiky-a-klimatu\\_final.docx](https://www.mpo.cz/assets/cz/energetika/strategicke-a-koncepcni-dokumenty/2020/1/Vnitrostani-plan-CR-v-oblasti-energetiky-a-klimatu_final.docx)

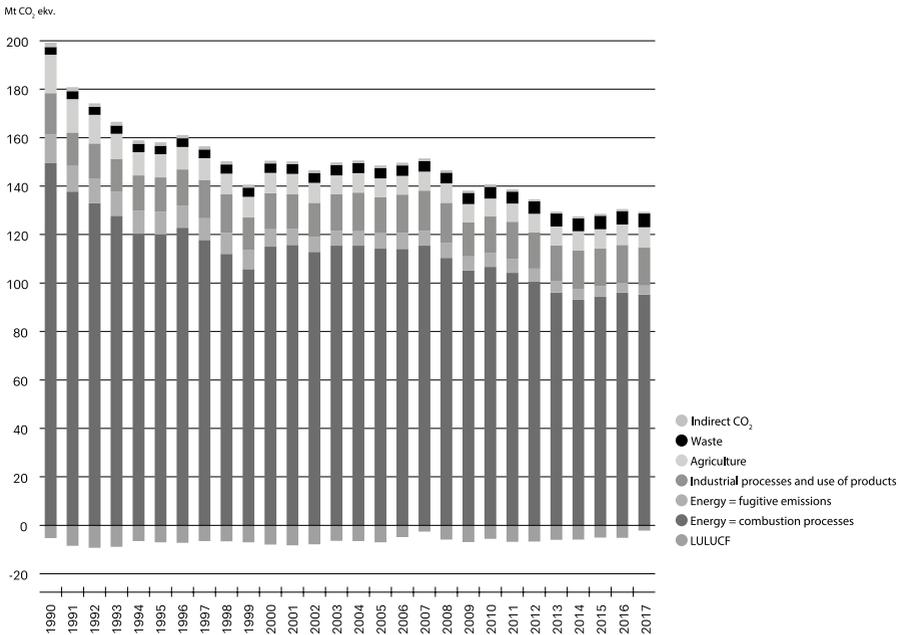
4 Česko na cestě k uhlíkové neutralitě. Analýza Vnitrostátního plánu ČR v oblasti energetiky a klimatu (2020); Czech Republic on the road to carbon neutrality. Analysis of the National Plan of the Czech Republic in the Field of Energy and Climate). Komora obnovitelných zdrojů energie. Available at: <https://www.komoraoze.cz/download/pdf/153.pdf>

5 Rozvoj obnovitelných zdrojů do roku 2030. Analýza zpracována pro Svaz moderní energetiky (2019; Development of renewable sources until 2030. Analysis prepared for the Modern Energy Union). Deloitte. Available at: [https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/cz/Documents/energy-resources/rozvoj\\_obnovitelných\\_zdroju\\_do\\_roku\\_2030\\_3.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/cz/Documents/energy-resources/rozvoj_obnovitelných_zdroju_do_roku_2030_3.pdf)

Not only is the Czech climate policy not in line with the Paris Agreement, but it is even actively blocking any steps that would bring the country and the European Union closer to its realization. As described above, the current EU-wide commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 % compared to 1990 is not in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The emission reduction target should be increased to at least 65 %. Czech Republic refuses to increase the target to 55 %, which is being promoted by the European Commission and most EU Member States.

For Czech Republic, increasing the targets for 2030 should not be a major problem. After the shutdown of much of the heavy industry after 1989, we experienced a sharp drop in emissions and a 40 % reduction is not a challenge. As stated in the 2018 Report on the Environment of the Czech Republic<sup>6</sup>, 'During the period 1990–2017, greenhouse gas emissions in Czech Republic decreased by 35.1 % and 0.9 % year-on-year, despite 4.4 % year-on-year GDP growth.'

### Development of aggregated greenhouse gas emissions in Czech Republic by sector [Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq.], 1990–2017



Source: Czech Hydrometeorological Institute

6 Zpráva o životním prostředí České republiky (2018); Report on the environment of the Czech Republic). Cenia. Available at: [https://www.cenia.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Zprava\\_o\\_ZP\\_CR\\_2018.pdf](https://www.cenia.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Zprava_o_ZP_CR_2018.pdf)

Therefore, even official government documents, such as its Climate Protection Policy<sup>7</sup>, approved before the publication of the key IPCC report on 1.5 °C, anticipate a 50 % reduction by 2030. However, even this governmental document is not respected by the Czech government, and its goals have so far largely remained unfulfilled. Moreover, now that the time has come to break bread, any increase of common European climate targets is rejected by the Czech government.

However, we are not failing only at the European level. At home, too, we have been witnessing at least three scandalous decisions that will make it very difficult for us to meet our climate commitments in the future. On Friday 4 October 2019, the state-controlled company ČEZ announced<sup>8</sup> its intention to sell its outdated lignite powered-plant Počerady to the coal baron Pavel Tykač, who wants to run this polluting lignite relic for many more years. Another lignite power plant Chvaletice<sup>9</sup> was to be closed by ČEZ in 2015 but was also sold to Tykač. Moreover, an unprecedented exemption from emission limits was issued by the regional authorities in Pardubice for the operation of the power plant; Tykač can therefore continue to operate the facility without any significant greening even after 2021. A third scandal is the planned prolongation of mining in the Bílina lignite mine until 2035.<sup>10</sup>

## Recommendations:

- Support the European CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets increase at least to 55 % by 2030, ideally to 65 %.
- Substantially increase the share of RESs in Czech Republic above the level of existing plans.
- Prepare and implement a roadmap for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest, ideally by 2040.
- Set the date for a coal phase-out, shut down all coal-fired condensing power plants by 2030, and proceed to a complete coal phase-out by 2035 at the latest.
- Do not expand coal mines.
- Introduce a carbon tax or support its introduction at the European level.
- Do not use European funds to finance fossil fuel projects and fossil fuel infrastructure.
- Use all revenues from the EU ETS for emission reduction measures.
- Set a stable regulatory environment for the development of renewables and do not exclude any renewables from the auction system
- Promote energy savings, especially in buildings and industry.

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7 Climate Protection Policy in the Czech Republic. Ministry of the Environment. Available at: [https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/politika\\_ochrany\\_klimatu\\_2017/\\$FILE/OEOK-POK-20170329.pdf](https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/politika_ochrany_klimatu_2017/$FILE/OEOK-POK-20170329.pdf)

8 <https://www.greenpeace.org/czech/tiskova-zprava/4507/papirovy-utlum-uhli-v-podani-cezu-prodej-elektrarnypocerady-znecistovani-naopak-prodluzuje/>

9 <https://www.greenpeace.org/czech/clanek/4185/provoz-elektrarny-chvaletice-je-hazard-se-zdravim-a-mrhanipenezi-danovych-poplatniku/>

10 <https://www.greenpeace.org/czech/clanek/4196/velkolom-bilina-kam-az-muze-klesnout-ministerstvovzivotniho-prostredi/>

# Carbon sinks and adaptation: The Czech landscape continues to be transformed into a desert

*Josef Patočka (RESET: Platforma pro sociálně-ekologickou transformaci, z. s. – RESET: Platform for Socio-Ecological Transformation, z. s.)*

In addition to the general objectives of keeping global warming below 1.5 °C and 2 °C, which imply the need for a rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, the Paris Agreement also emphasizes the need to protect and expand carbon sinks. This technical concept implies a simple fact: Healthy ecosystems, especially forests, capture carbon and sequester it. On the contrary, their destruction, in the form of deforestation or careless handling of agricultural land not only reduces nature's ability to cope with industrially emitted carbon but also releases more carbon into the atmosphere. Therefore, Article 5, paragraph 1, of the Agreement stipulates that 'parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases.'<sup>1</sup>

The health of the landscape will also be important in terms of our ability to adapt to the increase in temperature, which will be inevitable due to the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Article 7 of the Agreement therefore sets out 'the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response.'<sup>2</sup> In other words, mitigation and adaptation are two sides of the same coin for which a change in approach to the landscape is a component as crucial as the decarbonization of energy, transport or industry. Is Czech Republic's response in this area 'appropriate'?

## Forest calamity: Story of a death foretold

In recent years, Czech Republic has witnessed the unprecedented death of its forest ecosystems. The catastrophic extent of forest extinction was documented in a 2018 report on the state of forests (Zpráva o stavu lesů za rok 2018), according to which the rate of harvest-

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1 Paris Agreement, United Nations (2015). Available at: [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

2 Ibid.

ed dead wood reached the highest values in the entire history of Czech Republic.<sup>3</sup> However, it is not just the drought and the associated gradation of the bark beetle that are to blame; highly problematic are especially the inappropriate age structure, species composition and forest management. Czech forests have so far been dominated by spruce (over 50 % of forest cover), planted in the usual monocultural way, even in completely unsuitable localities where they do not belong. In addition, subsidies continues to be provided for inappropriate planting. The threat that Czech forests would decline without fundamental changes and strong measures has been warned against by scientists since the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

The solutions are well known: stop the unadvisable planting of spruces, stop clear-cutting, and make space for the natural regeneration of forests. Nevertheless, forest policy has not changed significantly. In an amendment of the Forest Act in 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture even refused to support a number of recommended amendments. Despite the recommendations of experts and the requirements of civic campaigns, such as 'Zachraňme lesy' (Let's save the forests), spruce remains the most frequently planted tree species, and, conversely, natural forest regeneration by spontaneous rejuvenation, which is the most suitable from the expert point of view as it creates resilient forests capable of surviving under the new climate conditions, is implemented only on a fraction of the territory.<sup>5</sup> Instead of managing its adaptation to the new reality, Czech Republic is producing further problems for the future, all the more so as the dying of forests not only reduces their ability to sequester carbon but also contributes to a further deepening of the drought by reducing the landscape's ability to retain water.

## The drying of the landscape and unsustainable agriculture

Czech Republic has also struggled with agricultural drought. It has led to serious losses estimated at CZK 11 to 12 billion in 2018 alone.<sup>6</sup> After May this year, when the drought was affecting 98 % of arable land, floods came in June, killing at least eight people and causing damage worth millions of Czech crowns. Both have common causes: In addition to

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3 Zpráva o stavu lesa a lesního hospodářství České republiky v roce 2018 (Report on the state of forests and forest management in the Czech Republic in 2018). Ministerstvo zemědělství. Available at: [http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/634125/Zprava\\_o\\_stavu\\_lesa\\_2018\\_verze\\_vladni.pdf](http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/634125/Zprava_o_stavu_lesa_2018_verze_vladni.pdf).

4 Stanovisko vědců a odborných pracovníků k ochraně českých lesů (2006) (Opinion of scientists and professionals on the protection of Czech forests). Available at: [http://data.idnes.cz/soubory/igcechy/A060515\\_TOM\\_STAV\\_LESU\\_STANOVISKO.PDF](http://data.idnes.cz/soubory/igcechy/A060515_TOM_STAV_LESU_STANOVISKO.PDF)

5 Press release by Friends of Earth CZ: „Vládní zpráva o stavu lesů potvrzuje děsivý rozsah jejich hynutí. V některých oblastech se však přesto dál sází hlavně smrky. Prostor musí dostat přirozená obnova“ (2019; The government report on the condition of forests confirms the terrible extent of their death. In some areas, however, spruces are still mainly planted. Natural renewal must be given space). Available at: <https://ekolist.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/tiskove-zpravy/vladni-zprava-o-stavu-lesu-potvrzuje-desivy-rozsah-jejich-hynuti-v-nekterych-oblastech-se-vsak-presto-dal-sazi-hlavne>

6 Žalud, Z. et. al. (2020). Zemědělské sucho v České republice – vývoj, dopady a adaptace. Agrární komora České Republiky. Available at: <https://www.intersucho.cz/userfiles/file/ZemedelskeSucho.pdf>.

warming, which increases the likelihood of extreme events even more, it is also due to the deteriorating ability of the Czech landscape to retain water. Intensive industrial agriculture is responsible for this, among other things. Today, the reluctance of the state and the resistance of large agro-corporations, for which unsustainable management is advantageous, stand in the way of a change in agricultural practices and the removal of previously implemented drainage measures. Although the Ministry of the Environment subsidizes various small measures and projects, such as rainwater retention, systemic measures to the necessary extent are still lacking. Another problem is the low fees charged for water abstraction, which do not motivate large customers in particular to conserve rare raw materials. Experts agree that the fees must be increased, preferably in an economically progressive way – the government left the fees unchanged when amending the Water Act.

Environmentalists and small farmers criticize the government's approach to drought for lacking conception, being chaotic and outweighing the interests of the agrarian lobby.<sup>7</sup> Instead of a systematic policy of retaining water in the countryside by using close-to-nature measures such as ponds, wetlands and other 'water return' methods,<sup>8</sup> the Ministry of Agriculture promotes a costly construction of dam reservoirs. However, without increasing water retention in the landscape, the reservoirs will not help in solving the drought. Unscrupulous farming not only leads to the intensification of drought but also to the degradation of agricultural soil itself: According to the government's report on this issue, more than half of our soil is endangered by water erosion and up to 21 million tons of topsoil are lost annually.<sup>9</sup> Another large problem in soil degradation is fertilization, where mineral fertilizers continue to predominate over organic fertilizers. The soil should be protected by the so-called anti-erosion regulation, which was supposed to come into force in 2017 but was postponed until January 2021; this is when we will also see another partial improvement limiting the maximum monocultural area to 30 hectares. Thus, despite minor improvements, the current inappropriate landscape policy makes the ability to adapt to the effects of climate change worse, not better.<sup>10</sup> Metaphorically speaking, unscrupulous farming is turning a substantial part of the Czech agricultural landscape 'into a desert'.

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7 Kubala, R. (2019). Vláda v řešení sucha selhává, shodují se odborníci, ekologové i opozice. Deník Referendum. Available at: <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/31156-vlada-v-reseni-sucha-selhava-shoduji-se-odborniciekologove-i-opozice>

8 Zadrž vody v celé ploše povodí Zdoňovsko (2018). Spolek Živá voda. Available at: <https://zivavoda.biz/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/VODA-Zdonov.pdf>

9 Situační a výhledová zpráva – půda (2018). Ministerstvo zemědělství. Available at: [http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/611976/SVZ\\_Puda\\_11\\_2018.pdf](http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/611976/SVZ_Puda_11_2018.pdf)

10 Salzmann, K. (2020). „Jak adaptovat zemědělskou krajinu na klimatické změny?“ Ekolist. Available at: <https://ekolist.cz/cz/publicistika/nazory-a-komentare/klaran-salzmann-jak-adaptovat-zemedelskou-krajinu-naklimaticke-zmeny>

## Conclusion: Solutions exist – big business and bureaucratic inertia stand in the way

The described developments can have serious social consequences. Drought is already leading to higher prices of basic foodstuffs, which is affecting low-income households in particular. In the future, the combination of global warming and landscape devastation may become a serious threat to the food supply. This is also why the IPCC's thematic Special Report on Climate Change and Land, which examines the conditions for implementing the Paris Agreement in the specific areas of agriculture and forestry, calls for a fundamental turnaround in current practice. Closer-to-nature agriculture and the restoration of ecosystems such as natural forests or wetlands can help curb the climate crisis. Contrarywise, careless handling of the soil and further destruction of ecosystems are deepening it.<sup>11</sup>

Similar to energy and transport, solutions in both areas, forestry and agriculture, exist: natural reforestation and selective management instead of clear-cutting, restoration of ponds and wetlands and the return of water to the landscape, the greening of agriculture and support for smaller family farms at the expense of agro-groups. In all these areas, the main obstacle is not a lack of knowledge but the power of big business, as in the case of agriculture, which is dependent on unsustainable development, as well as the bureaucratic inertia of institutions that favour outdated technocratic measures at the expense of real solutions. This is also why, as with reducing emissions, civic activity aimed at promoting the necessary changes will be crucial in the future.

### Recommendations:

- End and no longer subsidize the planting of forest cover with an unsuitable species composition. Increase the minimum share of soil to improve and stabilize trees, i.e., mainly deciduous and fir trees, including in places where the law now allows the planting of 60 % spruce and 40 % Douglas fir. At the same time, the share of newly introduced and invasive trees in forests needs to be reduced.
- Reduce clear-cutting, which destroys valuable forest soil and life inside it. Dry trees that no longer allow the bark beetle to spread further must be kept in the forest to enrich the badly maintained soil and provide newly growing trees with necessary shade.
- Set rules for agricultural and forestry management so as to maintain and improve soil quality and its ability to retain water and sequester carbon. Reduce the use of mineral fertilizers and increase the share of organic matter in agricultural land. Start implementing the National Action Plan on Adaptation to Climate Change immediately.

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11 Climate Change and Land: An IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems (2019). IPCC. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>

- It is necessary to return water to the forests. It is drained from them by useless land draining, often also by an unnecessarily dense road network and by poorly built hydraulic structures. To preserve water in the forest, it is also necessary to restore a good species composition to the forest.
- Do not implement any new drainage measures and accelerate the removal of those already implemented. Complement small water retention measures (such as the Dešťovka (rainwater) programme) by introducing systemic support for water retention in the countryside with closer-to-nature measures, such as the construction of ponds, wetlands and other methods of 'water return'. Do not support the construction of dams. Introduce an economically progressive increase in water abstraction fees which would motivate large customers in particular to be sparing with water.
- Foresters currently must provide vegetation cover within 10 years, which is sufficient to allow natural reforestation with birch and other pioneer trees. However, this period of ten years is set only temporarily due to the current calamity. This measure should be permanent and no longer be repealed, as stated by the current regulation.
- All restrictions that complicate historical and now alternative management methods must be removed from the Forest Act. In risky climatic conditions, these methods are much more resilient: They mainly involve undergrowth management, coppicing or the management of medium forests. The state should not force owners to manage forests in a risky way.
- In order to protect the non-forest agricultural landscape and forest vegetation, it is currently essential to reduce the numbers of overcrowded hoofed animals, which are not yet regulated in line with the degree of forest damage they cause. An adjustment of this situation is currently being negotiated as part of an amendment to the Hunting Act.

# The Paris Agreement and a just transition

*Kristina Zindulková (Association for International Affairs)*

The Paris Agreement calls for warming to be kept well below 2 °C, which means a rapid shift away from coal in favour of low-carbon energy sources.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it emphasizes 'the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs.'<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is necessary to ensure decent conditions for people employed in the coal industry and, in general, the coal regions that will be the most affected by the coal phase-out.

## Allowance, early retirement or retraining?

The endangered workers in Czech Republic are mostly miners, of which there are about 14 000 in three Czech coal regions: the Karlovy Vary, Ústí nad Labem and Moravian-Silesian regions.<sup>3</sup> There are a further 3 000 employees approximately in power and heating plants. Another 10 000 jobs are linked to the coal production chain, and jobs in metallurgy also depend on hard coal mining.<sup>4</sup> Although these figures are negligible in the context of Czech Republic (roughly 0.5 % of the active workforce), the share is significantly higher in coal regions (2 to 3 %). In the coal regions, unemployment is generally higher than the national average; specific mining localities sometimes exceed even the regional average (sometimes by almost 4 % above the Czech average, e.g., in Karviná or Most), which is related to the long-term trend of job loss.

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1 Global Warming of 1.5 °C: Mitigation pathways compatible with 1.5°C in the context of sustainable development. IPCC. Dostupné na: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-2/>

2 Paris Agreement, United Nations (2015). Available at: [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

3 Těžba nerostných surovin v České republice a zaměstnanost v těžebním sektoru (2019). Praha: Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu. Available at: <https://www.mpo.cz/cz/stavebnictvi-a-suroviny/surovinova-politika/statnisiurovinova-politika-nerostne-suroviny-v-cr/tezba-nerostnych-surovin-v-ceske-republice-a-zamestnanost-vezebnim-sektoru--248701/>

4 Alves Dias, P. (2018). EU coal regions: opportunities and challenges ahead. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-researchreports/eu-coal-regions-opportunities-and-challenges-ahead>

Depending on the length of time worked and age, employees made redundant due to diversion from coal have the right to retire early or receive monthly allowances of 8 000 crowns if they worked in deep mines or 5 300 crowns if they worked on the surface.<sup>5</sup> Compensation and early pensions are an important support tool, which was created in 2016. However, there is still no longer-term solution, such as a sophisticated retraining programme that would map the requirements of former coal sector employees as well as monitor labour demand and participate in creating suitable jobs, because it is the mismatch between labour supply and demand that is often the problem in successful retraining.<sup>6</sup> Working with miners and mining unions is essential to creating fair transformation conditions.

## Unmet needs of coal regions

Coal regions are among the least developed regions in Czech Republic: They lag behind the Czech average in, for example, GDP per capita, average wage, number of people with a university degree or high school diploma and population growth, which is often negative and associated with an aging population. On the contrary, these regions are ranked at the forefront of unemployment, the number of segregated areas and the number of people in execution. A coal phase-out is an opportunity for economic recovery, but it has negative effects not only on redundant workers but also on municipal budget revenues, for example, by reducing sponsorship from the coal business.

The regional development of coal regions is therefore crucial for a just transformation. RE:START, a strategy for the economic restructuring of the Ústí nad Labem, Moravian-Silesian and Karlovy Vary regions was created for this purpose in 2016, and distributes finances mainly from European funds. It has given rise to important projects, but it has not managed to get more per capita funding to coal regions in comparison to other regions.<sup>7</sup> In comparison to other regions, coal regions are the most in need. Moreover, the revenues of coal companies are drained from them through emissions trading. Therefore, there is a need for significantly higher support than they currently receive and to ensure better use of available financial resources from subsidies. An analysis from Centrum pro dopravu a en-

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5 Nařízení vlády č. 342/2016 Sb.: Nařízení vlády o příspěvku ke zmírnění sociálních dopadů souvisejících s restrukturalizací nebo útlumem činnosti právnických osob zabývajících se těžbou uhlí nebo uranu (Government Regulation No. 342/2016 Coll.: Government Regulation on the contribution to mitigating social impacts related to restructuring or downsizing of legal entities engaged in coal or uranium mining).

6 Caldecott, B. (2017). Lessons from previous 'coal transitions' High-level Summary for Decision-makers. IDDRi a Climate Strategies. Available at: [https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/import/publications/coal\\_synthesisreport\\_v04.pdf](https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/import/publications/coal_synthesisreport_v04.pdf)

7 Heuer, D. (2018). Analýza veřejných finančních prostředků plynoucích do Ústeckého kraje. Centrum pro dopravu a energetiku. Available at: <https://www.cde-org.cz/media/object/1549/analiza-financnich-prostredku-usteckykraj.pdf>

ergetiku (Centre for Transport and Energy)<sup>8</sup> suggests that in order to improve the use of subsidies, it is necessary to ensure easier readability for applicants, fixed timeframes, assistance in completing applications, support with applications for small entities, the possibility to replicate successful projects or the establishment of an ombudsman for applicants.

## Regional renewal funds = untapped opportunity

The European Commission has approved the allocation of approximately CZK 80 billion (EUR 3.4 billion) to Czech coal regions under the Just Transition Fund. These can be drawn until 2025,<sup>9</sup> which is a huge amount compared to the number of billions allocated by RE:START. Its use is conditioned by the creation of Territorial Just Transition Plans for coal regions. Hundreds more billions will be available from the EU Modernization Fund.

However, Czech Republic is not yet ready for such amounts as it is currently unable to draw subsidies even from the existing funds.<sup>10</sup> In order for the amount to be used effectively, it is necessary to prepare ambitious projects based on public needs and a transparent draw-down system instead of delaying a coal phase-out. In the best case scenario, plans should be created based on the specific needs of the regions and in cooperation with the general public to ensure that the projects are as effective as possible in terms of regional development. An example of good practice is the Moravian-Silesian Region, which initiated the creation of the POHO 2030 concept, which proposes complex projects for the renewal of the Karviná region. The concept was developed with the participation of the public and thus has a better chance of successful implementation and effectiveness.<sup>11</sup> Although it was created independently of the need for a land-use plan, it can become a useful basis for one.

## We are not alone here

As discussed in the previous chapter, Czech Republic's targets for mitigating the effects of climate change are insufficient from the perspective of global interests as they would

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8 Šindelář, M. Hledání příčin nízkého čerpání EU fondů v Ústeckém kraji. Centrum pro dopravu a energetiku. Available at: <https://www.cde-org.cz/media/object/1563/hledani-pricin-nizkeho-cerpani.pdf>

9 Morgan, S. (2020). Number crunching on expanded Just Transition Fund continues. Euractiv.com. Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/news/number-crunching-on-expanded-just-transitionfund-continues/>

10 Funding climate and energy transition in the EU: the untapped potential of regional funds assessment of the European regional development and cohesion funds' Investments in energy infrastructure 2014-2020 (2020). CAN Europe. Available at: <http://caneurope.org/docman/climate-finance-development/3599-funding-climateand-energy-transition-in-the-eu/file>

11 Pohornická krajina Karvinska se významně promění. Program POHO2030 má konkrétnější obrysy (2020). Moravskoslezský kraj. Available at: [https://www.msk.cz/cz/rozvoj\\_kraje/pohornicka-krajina-karvinska-sevyznamne-promeni--program-poho2030-ma-konkretnejsi-obrysy-148091/](https://www.msk.cz/cz/rozvoj_kraje/pohornicka-krajina-karvinska-sevyznamne-promeni--program-poho2030-ma-konkretnejsi-obrysy-148091/)

not prevent warming with disproportionately negative impacts on the most vulnerable groups of people. The Paris Agreement emphasizes global justice. This means that developed countries, including Czech Republic, are to meet their commitment to provide 'resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention'.<sup>12</sup> According to the Association for International Affairs, finances contributed by Czech Republic to the Green Climate Fund represent only 0.004 % of its GDP, while in other EU countries the average is 0.042 % of GDP. In addition, the Czech contribution has decreased in recent years.<sup>13</sup>

## Recommendations:

- Develop retraining programmes tailored to workers in the coal industry who are at risk of redundancy while mapping and creating suitable jobs.
- Streamline support for coal regions. Ensure smooth processes of drawing subsidies together with public support for their use.
- Prepare ambitious projects for the renewal of regions based on their specific needs and conditions and make them the basis for Territorial Just Transition Plans. Ensure transparency and public participation in the creation of land-use plans also within RE:START.
- Significantly increase the contribution to the Green Climate Fund.

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12 Paris Agreement, United Nations (2015). Available at: [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

13 Králíková, Š. (2019). Klimatické finance: svět je potřejuje, Česko má na víc. Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky. Available at: [http://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/AMO\\_Klimatick%C3%A9-finance\\_tisk.pdf](http://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/AMO_Klimatick%C3%A9-finance_tisk.pdf)

# About Social Watch

Social Watch is an international network of citizens' organizations in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to end all forms of discrimination and racism, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. We are committed to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and we emphasize the right of all people not to be poor.

Social Watch holds governments, the UN system and international organizations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty.

Social Watch will achieve its objectives through a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organizational development and networking. Social Watch promotes people-centred sustainable development.

## Social Watch Czech Republic

The coalition Social Watch Czech Republic has been established informally in 2008 as a network of NGOs, academia, and experts from different fields of social science.

Since 2015 the coalition is established as a formal organization. Currently, its members are:

- ADEPTTs
- Alternativa Zdola
- EDUCON
- Ekumenická akademie
- EUROSOLAR
- Fórum 50 %
- NESEHNUTÍ
- Svět bez válek a násilí
- Trast pro ekonomiku a společnost
- Wontanara

The coalition Social Watch Czech Republic is supported by its individual member organizations and individual members. Some activities are covered by contributions from individuals, organizations or projects.

Further information and publications can be found at [www.socialwatch.cz](http://www.socialwatch.cz) and [www.socialwatch.org](http://www.socialwatch.org)

## CLIMATE COALITION

KLIMATICKÁ KOALICE (CLIMATE COALITION) is a platform of Czech non-state, non-profit organizations which are concerned especially with the protection of climate and the environment, climate crisis mitigation and adaptation to its impacts, the social aspects of the climate crisis, developmental cooperation and humanitarian aid. It was founded in 2007. Its members are: Adra, o.p.s., Automat, Calla – Association for Preservation of the Environment, CARE Czech Republic z.s., Centrum pro dopravu a energetiku (Centre for transport and energy, CI2, o.p.s., Česko proti chudobě (Czechia against poverty), Česko za klima (Czechia for climate), People in Need, ČSOP JARO Jaroměř (Czech union for nature conservation JARO Jaroměř), Doctors for Future, Educon, Ekologický institut Veronica (Veronica ecological institute), Ekumenická akademie Praha (Ecumenical academy Prague), FoRS – České fórum pro rozvojovou spolupráci (Czech forum for development cooperation), Frank Bold, Gopolis – Pražský institut pro globální politiku (Prague institute for global politics), Greenpeace CZ, Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, Charita ČR (Charity CZ), Klimatická žaloba (Climate litigation), Koalice proti palmovému oleji (Coalition against palm oil), Limity jsme my (We are the limits), Nadace Partnerství (Partnership foundation), Na mysl, z.ú., Přátelé přírody ČR (Friends of nature Czech Republic), The Czech Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR), Rodiče za klima Liberec (Parents for climate Liberec), STUŽ - Společnost pro trvale udržitelný život (Society for permanently sustainable life), and Zeleň kruh – Asociace ekologických organizací (Green Circle – Association of ecological organizations)



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