

March 9, 2021

Joint letter to the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Parliament

Added value of a European Climate Change Council

Dear President of the European Council Michel, Dear Minister Matos Fernandes, Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans, Dear Members of Parliament: Guteland, Canfin, Bloss, Krasnodębski, Liese, Limmer, Modig, Torvalds and Zalewska,

We are glad to see that the EU is pursuing the adoption of a climate law with enhanced ambitions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This represents a critical and crucial step towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement.

In the context of the EU climate law, we have been following the debate on the establishment of a Climate Change Council at the European level. As governmental and parliamentary advisory councils on climate change, the environment and sustainable development, and members and partners of the EEAC Network, we send you this joint letter to share our views on the added value that advisory councils have, and how this added value would also apply to a potential European Climate Change Council.

As advisory councils, we contribute to the creation of climate change policies. We also analyze the different pathways to climate neutrality in our respective Member States and give independent recommendations to policymakers. In that regard, we wish to highlight four key aspects in which advisory councils at the subnational, national, and European level can create added value:

1. **Give independent and scientifically sound policy recommendations focused on increasing overall societal benefits.** The economic and natural resources of society are limited and therefore, it is of utmost importance that climate change policy is drafted with a focus on achieving the climate goals in a cost effective and socially/culturally sensitive way, while also ensuring social balance and taking into account different economic structures and circumstances across Member States, as well as the overarching goal of a global transformation towards sustainability. Similar to our councils, a European Climate Change Council should also be enabled to give recommendations independent of political and sectorial interests on how best to create policies with a holistic perspective and focus on cost-efficiency, while at the same time taking into account public financial constraints as well as competitiveness and the “just transition”-perspective.
2. **Provide a holistic and cross-sectorial perspective.** Many sectors will be affected by the transition to a climate neutral society. Advisory councils at the regional, national and EU level would be able to identify and analyze the potentials for sector coupling and give recommendations on how best to integrate systems thinking by providing inter- and transdisciplinary-based policy advice. Additionally, an advisory council at the European level would be able to identify ways to make both national goals and policies and EU level goals and policy work better together.

3. **Create consistency between policies and EU's long-term goal of climate neutrality by 2050.** The transition does not happen overnight. Therefore, it is essential that policies directed at reaching the near-term climate goals are consistent with reaching both climate neutrality and the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. Advisory councils have the ability to analyze and direct attention to the long-term aspects and give advice on how to ensure that policies are aligned with the long-term goals. Moreover, achieving consistency between policies and the long-term target has the benefit of avoiding stranded assets. This ability of an advisory council to create consistency would undoubtedly also apply to an advisory council at the EU level.
4. **Provide a useful and valuable voice in the public debate and ensure better consistency between EU and national policies.** Advisory councils have shown a strong presence in the public discourse in their respective Member States. They have been able to highlight important issues for policymakers, interest groups and the general public alike in the complex field of climate change policy. An advisory council at the EU level could have the same effect, but on a much larger scale, thus, fostering a public debate on the important decisions that need to be taken on a European level. Finally, an advisory council at the EU level could enhance the link between national advisory councils and their work, and vice versa, if the necessary coordination mechanisms are put in place.

We sincerely hope that this letter has demonstrated a number of the key added values that advisory councils have. We expect a European Climate Change Council to have similar added value. Following this letter, we would be glad to elaborate upon our views regarding the possible remit, composition and governance of a European Climate Change Council during a formal meeting with you. We are at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,

Arnau Queralt-Bassa, Chairman of the
EEAC Network

Peter Møllgaard, Chair of the Danish
Council on Climate Change

Markku Ollikainen, Chair of the Finnish
Climate Change Panel

Corinne Le Quere, Chair of the French High
Council on Climate

Dr. Julia Hertin, Managing Director in the
German Advisory Council on the
Environment

Sabine Schlacke, Chair of the German
Advisory Council on Global Change

Gábor Bartus, Secretary general of the
Hungarian Council for Sustainable
Development

Marie Donnelly, Chair of the Climate Change
Advisory Council, Ireland

Dr Larry O'Connell, Director of the Irish National Economic & Social Council

Jan Jaap de Graeff, Chair of The Council for the Environment and Infrastructure, The Netherlands

Filipe Duarte Santos, Chairman of the Portuguese National Council on the Environment and Sustainable Development

Ramon Roca, Chair of the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development of Catalonia

Johan Kuylenstierna, Chair of the Swedish Climate Policy Council

Folmer de Haan, Chair of the Climate and Energy Working group in The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network