

## **Let's stop the climate disaster together!**

**Non-governmental organizations from Poland, Czechia and Hungary call citizens to urge their governments to support climate protection actions and the transition of economies and energy sectors in the Visegrad countries**

Impacts of climate change for the Visegrad group countries are not a distant future, it is the present. These already worsen the quality of life of the inhabitants of the regions, bring losses to the economy and create barriers to further social and economic development. Climate change constitutes a growing threat to ecosystems, and extreme weather is a threat to our safety and life.

The recent special IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report clearly states that we must act immediately to prevent a climate disaster, halting global warming at 1,5 C. We have only 10-12 years to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, by the middle of this century, ensure that the European and World economy and society develop in a carbon neutral manner. The implementation of these goals is the only way to ensure safety for ourselves, our children and grandchildren.

The international climate summit – COP24 in Katowice – which has just ended did not bring a breakthrough, similarly to other COPs before. It's the last moment not only for politicians but for all citizens to undertake urgent action because we all share climate problems – we all breathe the same air. Being non-governmental organizations from the countries belonging to the Visegrad Group, we call on all citizens, especially the media and the educational sector to demand adequate action from politicians and make them accountable (for instance during the elections to the European Parliament in 2019) for the actions within:

- gradual, but consistent phasing out coal based energy production by 2030. Implementation of development programs that will ensure that in 2050 the economy in our region will be free from GHG emissions,
- supporting the European Union's efforts to introduce more ambitious targets for the development of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency reaching 40-50% in the electricity production by 2030,
- increasing support for civil society and community activities within the implementation of climate policy objectives.

Additionally, everyone among us citizens needs to broaden their knowledge about climate issues and educate others. Everyone individually by choosing right behaviors, for instance using the public transport, not wasting resources, limiting meat consumption and promoting such lifestyle, purchasing of local products etc. – needs to educate their own carbon footprint and impact on climate. There are already many existing alternatives to fossil fuels, also for Visegrad countries, including:

### *1) Good practices – Poland*

*Thorough thermal upgrading, robust thermal insulation, replacing windows with energy-efficient, roof insulation etc. in a school complex in Końskie.*

*The introduction of external air filtration and heat recuperation, installation of heat pumps and photovoltaic panels on its roof ensured a higher quality of air for students and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Filters capture over 90 percent of particulate matter containing PM10 and PM 2.5 particles.*

*CO2 emissions have been reduced approximately ten-fold, contributing to similar savings on heating. Investments totalling PLN 825 per square metre generated a return of capital expenditure within 7 years.*

<https://audycje.tokfm.pl/podcast/Co-robic-zeby-smog-nie-trul-dzieci-w-szkole/62008>

### *2) Good practices – Czech Republic*

*Kněžice – village in central Bohemia is energy self-sufficient thanks to combined renewable energy project. A heating plant fueled by residual straw enabled the village solve the problem with pollution from local boilers. With the biogas plant in place, organic waste from households and agricultural facilities is processed to produce heat and electricity for the village. Similar projects could be used very useful for local or regional economy. Kněžice project was built thanks to the governmental renewable energy support scheme which was discontinued in 2013. Re-establishment of a new state renewable energy support scheme is necessary for the development of municipality renewable energy projects. <http://www.go100re.net/properties/knezice/>*

### *3) Good practices – Hungary*

*Many small village municipalities like Derekegyhaz are Climate Star-award winning examples of energy efficiency and renewable investments. Derekegyhaz won the European Climate Star award as in the past decade they brought the village close to being energy-sufficient: they installed photovoltaic municipality lighting system, made energy renovations and put PV panels on community buildings, installed an environmentally friendly, energy saving water treatment system, amongst others. These complex investments inspire other municipalities and managed to revive a once slowly dying village. <http://www.peoplesbudget.eu/re-energising-village-life-in-hungary-with-eu-funds/>*

Climate protection and energy transition in Visegrad countries is possible and indispensable. It brings today a lot of benefits to the communities and to the country including clean air, healthier environment, new job opportunities and economy competitiveness.

It requires courage from politicians in power in our countries, but also courage and actions on the side of the citizens to use renewable sources of energy - which are becoming ever more competitive compared to fossil fuels - and energy efficiency.

Let's leave our home – Earth - to our children and grandchildren in a better condition compared to the one in which we had found it!

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