

REALITY OF CONTRADICTIONARY VISIONS IN SAVING ENVIRONMENT COMMUNICATION AREA

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ABSTRACT

We are living complicated but interesting times concerning the environment communication area, reflected by contradictory statements especially from political leaders. There is a strong disagreement among them of what really means saving the environment and what are the global warming effects for the human kind and for the globe. While there is one single but strong voice who said that global warming doesn't really exists, we have other political leaders who are the champions of protecting the environment.

In 2015 in Paris, nearly 200 countries were agreed to diminish greenhouse gas emissions in order to decrease the temperatures spiral with 2C or more above the pre-industrial era.

In this paper we will analyses what are the effects of these declarations and if back home their own countries, these leaders are really implementing their political statements. In order to do so, we are using comparative analysis with public data from different sources, PESTEL and SWOT analysis. Even though it is well known that politicians don't really keep their words it is worth to check factual what is the economic, environment and social reality regarding this subject.

KEYWORDS: *environment, communication, political statements, economic and social reality)*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015 in Paris, nearly 200 countries were agreed to diminish greenhouse gas emissions in order to decrease the temperatures spiral with 2 Celsius degrees or more above the pre-industrial era (Andreasen, 1994).

The Paris Agreement is a global climate change agreement reached in Paris on 12 December 2015. The agreement sets out an action plan to limit global warming "well below" 2 ° C. It covers the period from 2020.

The main elements of the Cop 21 Paris Agreement are, as follows:

- long-term objective: all governments have agreed to maintain a global average temperature increase well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and continue efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C;
- contributions: before and during the Paris Conference, countries have presented comprehensive national climate action plans to reduce their emissions;
- ambition: governments agreed to communicate their contributions every 5 years to set more ambitious targets;

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- transparency: they have also agreed to inform each other and the public about the outcome of their efforts to achieve the objectives they have proposed to ensure transparency and oversight;
- solidarity: the developed countries will continue to provide funding to combat climate change in order to help developing countries to reduce emissions but also to strengthen their resilience to the effects of climate change

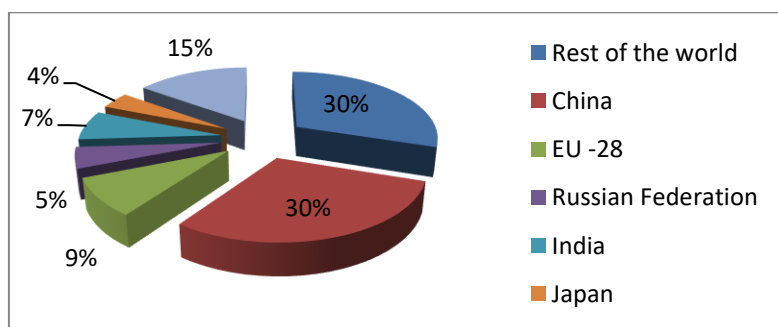
Unfortunately, today we are facing a new reality and the general joy expressed by all participants to Paris negotiations seemed to be overwhelmed if not shadowed. Even though The Paris Agreement is a monumental work of the United Nations, it lacks deontology - it is a miracle for what it could have been but a disaster for what it must be. And what is the main reason for this situation? Simply because there is no clear rule of how to do it (Costache et al., 2015), there is no punishment for those who are not doing it and ultimately because it was not established a control entity of this “cooling process”. The next COP is in Katowice and the end of 2018 and it is obviously that there is not much advancement from 2015.

2. FINDINGS

Everywhere in the world we see countries are still subsidizing for fossil fuels (Ionita et al, 2009). European financial instruments and public banks subsidize gas and oil production for more than €3 billion (\$3.5 billion) per year†. The powerful fossil fuel lobby is still exerting influence over governments (and in some of the countries this lobby is not even legal) — it is seen as the main reason for administration apparent lack of political decisions to take strong measures in order to protect the climate change (Stephen, John & Aepli, 2004).

United States, the second larger polluter of the world according to various data, by the voice of his newly elected president Donald Trump, decided on 1 June 2017, that the U.S. would cease all participation in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation. Trump stated that "The Paris accord will undermine the U.S. economy and puts the U.S. at a permanent disadvantage”.

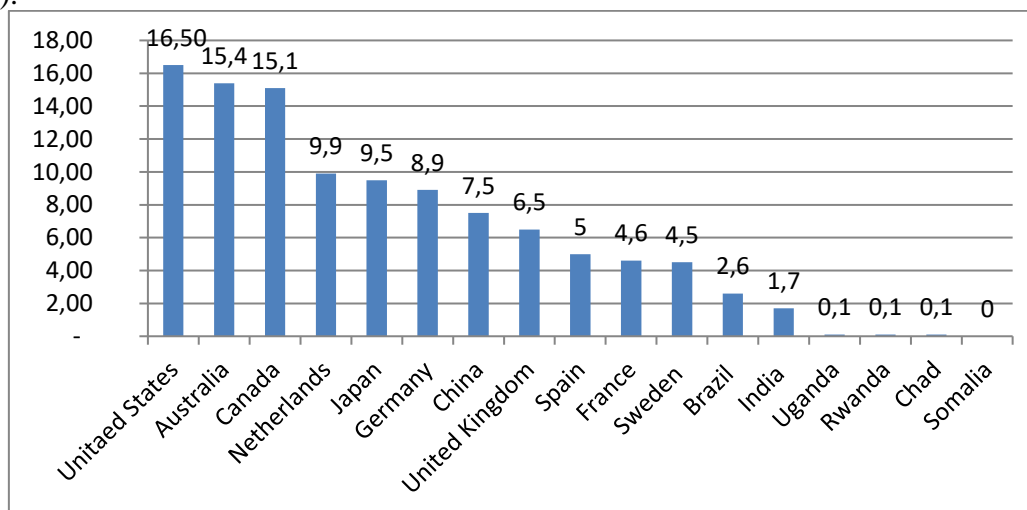
According to him the US is not the biggest polluter of the world and he even start a trade war with China, saying that they are not playing fair and claiming that the American companies who are producing in China don't respect the rules. Anyway, the main reason remains the unbalanced commercial deficit with China. We could also believe that the Chinese goods are cheaper to produce because the Asians don't really care about investing in environment protection and less because of productivity, low salary, etc. In order to understand the general context this point needs to be clarified. At some points it is right because US is polluting overall half as China and we can visualize this in the next graphic.



† <https://www.dw.com/en/paris-agreement-what-needs-to-happen-for-climate-action-to-succeed/a-45342788>

Percentage of global CO₂ emissions from Fossil Fuel, Combustion and Industrial Processes[‡]

But when we look further into details and calculate the CO₂ emission per capita we can see that the situation is quite opposite and the Chinese are well belloved the Americans (even under the Germans).



So now we can have a larger idea about who is polluting more and why Mr. Trump decided to get back from the Paris environment agreement.

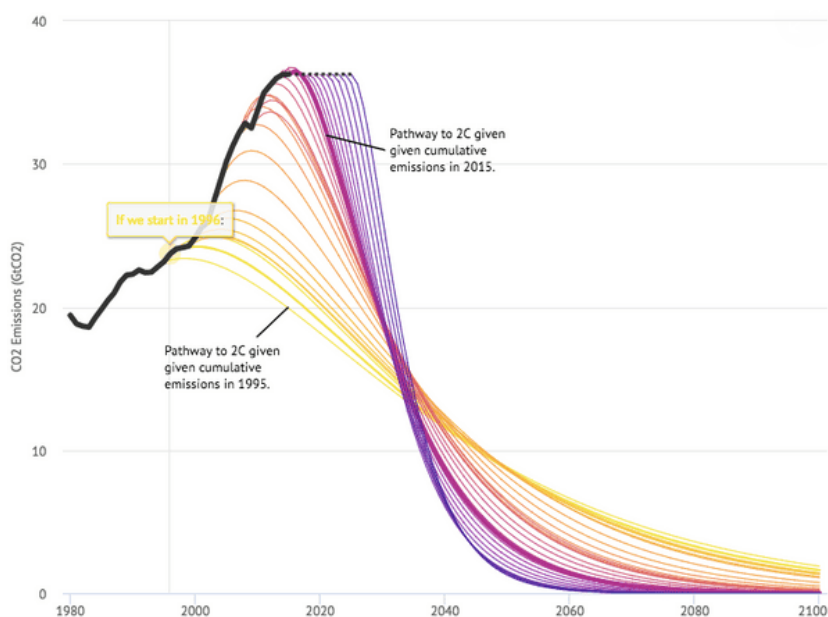
It clear that he is using this option as a way of saying I do what I want and I know is good for my Americans, no matter what the rest of world is saying.

Is this a chock for the rest of the people? Apparently yes but we have to remember the fact that during the presidential campaign, Trump had pledged to withdraw from the pact, saying a withdrawal would help a big part of American businesses and workers. Trump stated that the withdrawal would be in accordance with his America First policy. If we are agreed that US is a real and consolidated democracy and the majority of the electors voted for his new president (even though the popular vote has been won by his opponent, but this is another discussion) then we have to accept that maybe this is the willing of the American citizens. In any case, Mr. Trump didn't surprise the voters because he announced his intention during the campaign and with theirs vote he succeeds to move to the White House. We have to remember also that his predecessor, Barack Obama, who was a promoter of saving the environment and who ratified the Paris Agreement one year and a half earlier, was a supporter of Trump opponent. By his victory, no matter if we like it or not, the American majority accepted withdrawing from the treatment as being a good deal for the country.

On the other hand, we can see that inside the US there are other leaders who have a complete different view on this issue. Recently, California Governor Jerry Brown decided that the state will obtain all of its electricity from zero-carbon sources by 2045 (The Guardian, 2018) he also issued an executive order calling for the entire California economy to become carbon-neutral by 2045.

[‡] Source: own representation based on data obtained from Boden, T.A., Marland, G., and Andres, R.J. (2017). National CO₂ Emissions from Fossil-Fuel Burning, Cement Manufacture, and Gas Flaring: 1751-2014, Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, doi 10.3334/CDIAC/00001_V2017

There is a qualified opinion expressed by World Resource Institute who said that in order to stay below the Paris climate threshold of 2°C global warming above pre-industrial temperatures, humanity must become carbon-neutral by around 2060 or 2070 (World Resource Institute, 2018).



Global emission reduction trajectories associated with a 66% chance of avoiding more than 2°C warming by starting year[§].

Source: The Guardian, 2018

Solid black line shows historical emissions, while pointed black line shows emissions constant at 2016 levels. Even though this model may be considered as not being so accurate it gives us a clear visual representation of where we are.

If California can meet Brown's target, it will be providing the rest of the world a blueprint for meeting the Paris target. As the world's fifth-largest economy, California can provide a powerful roadmap for others to follow. It may be exactly what Paris Agreement needs to be a real success. In order to reach this target we should have another large discussion and long negotiation. Anyway, even though the governor is one of the vocal opponents of Trump administration, he can decide only in his jurisdiction. Taking his environment policy as an example could be a good start.

The fact that Mr. Trump declarations and environmental policies are not accepted, and we can see that are even contradicted by real actions in some states, let us believe that there is a certain resilience in the US system, as everywhere else, and it is hard to change something, even for a president.

"The Trump administration has made some dangerous changes to environmental policy, but the damage so far has been less than it initially appeared", said former Vice President Al Gore (a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2007 for his campaign to protect the environment) in an interview (AP News, 2018). As a matter of fact, the effective withdraw from the treaty will be next day after the 2020 presidential election. A new president can sent a notice to deny the previous demand, which means in 30 days US is back on, but for this we have to wait and see what is the willing of all Americans, not only a vocal minority. Nevertheless, this is a strong signal for the other American states but also for the other countries who signed the treaty.

All this being taken into consideration it remains an essential question to answer, why Mr. Trump wanted to get out from the agreement since there is no punishment in respecting it and even no control of the pollution curve evolution? The answer is, maybe, a political strategy to impress the simple American voter (those who voted for him and who will be probably asked to do it again for the next

[§] Robbie Andrew, CICERO and the Global Carbon Project. Illustration: Carbon Brief

election), to show him that the America is “great again” by not being part of the globalization process. Right now US is an independent country who take his own path, who care more about his own people and who will not waste the time or resources to be involved in international agenda environmental issue that cannot help the simple citizen on short term. Another explanation would be that keeping the old oil and coal industry alive would save probably 2.5 million jobs (according to Trump). The reality is that coal employment has moved slowly under Trump. Almost 2000 new jobs coming out from coal industry were created during Trump’s first 8 months, but the situations were less interesting in October since much of them were reduced. In December 2017 (so after 1 year of administration), the Bureau of Labor Statistics said that the total number of coal new jobs was just 900 (USA Today News, 2018). Coal production has slightly increased, around 6% in 2017, from 728 million tons in 2016 to 774 million tons in 2017, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

On the other hand, there are some other explanations about the increased number in coal exports; the most relevant is saying that it is due to international market factors which are beyond the Trump power and probably will not last forever. The demand for U.S. coal increased last year in import countries like China, Japan and India because of the tropical cyclone which disrupted their supply from Australia. Coal exports are expected to decrease though in 2018 and 2019.

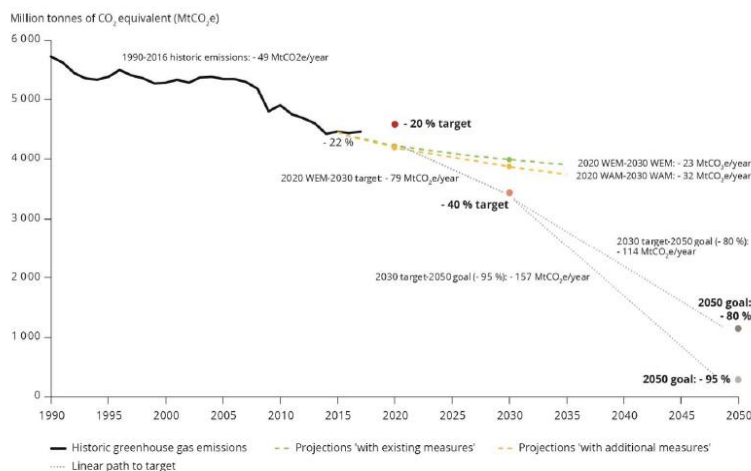
In any case, it is clear that playing with words, president Trump succeeds to give hope to the American miners but undermined a whole process of saving the planet. It looks like he sacrificed a chance to save planet in order to give fake hopes to a branch of workers. The regret is that he could do both, since nobody force him to take a position against global warming. It was, probably, only his way of making few people to feel proud of them.

If we move forward with our analysis, comparing with US or China, it is straight forward that EU is a champion. Comparing with other big countries, European Union is fighting not only against the global warming issue but against any environment protection issue.

In 2007 the EU decided to set as unilateral commitment climate and energy targets for the year 2020 (so called 20-20-20 rule). In 2009 this agreement was transformed in legislations.

- to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions GHG emissions by 20 % compared with 1990 levels;
- the binding targets to increase the share of energy from renewable sources in the EU’s gross final energy consumption to 20%, with a minimum of 10% share of renewables in the transport sector;
- the target of a 20 % reduction in energy consumption compared with baseline projections for 2020.

According to the European Environment Agency report released partially this year, it looks that the 2020 reduction target is expected to be met. EU decided to go further with his objectives and settled a new reduction target of at least 40 % by 2030 (compared with 1990 levels). If previous level will be apparently reached it will not be easy for the last one, with existing measures (WEM), therefore there is a need for additional measures (WAM).

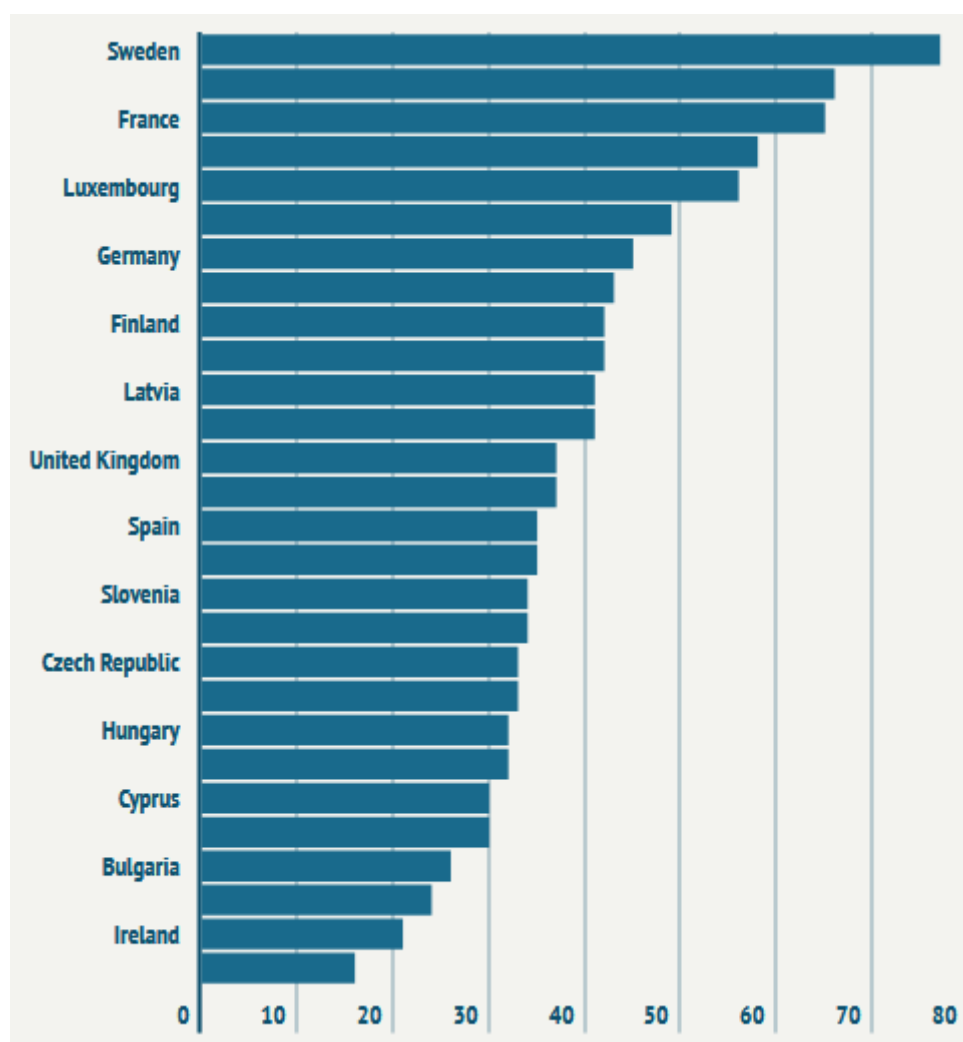


Greenhouse gas emission trends, projections and targets in the EU, 1990-2050

Source: European Environment Agency, 2018

Nevertheless, we have to see who, inside the EU, the real leader of the community is. In a report realised by Climate Action Network (CAN) and published in 2018 the situation is not presented as being very positive as we think it is. The documents show that most of EU countries are off target or they negotiated and fixed an easy target which means that they don't do enough in order to increase their climate action according with the Paris Agreement goal. Climate Action Network has given EU states a percentage ranking based on their progress in meeting climate change targets for 2020 and the extent to which they push for more ambitious policy to tackle the problem. Not even one EU country is performing sufficiently in both ambition and progress in reducing carbon emissions. Countries can and have to do more to fulfil the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Taking into consideration this reason, Sweden comes out as leader of the pack, followed by Portugal, France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.



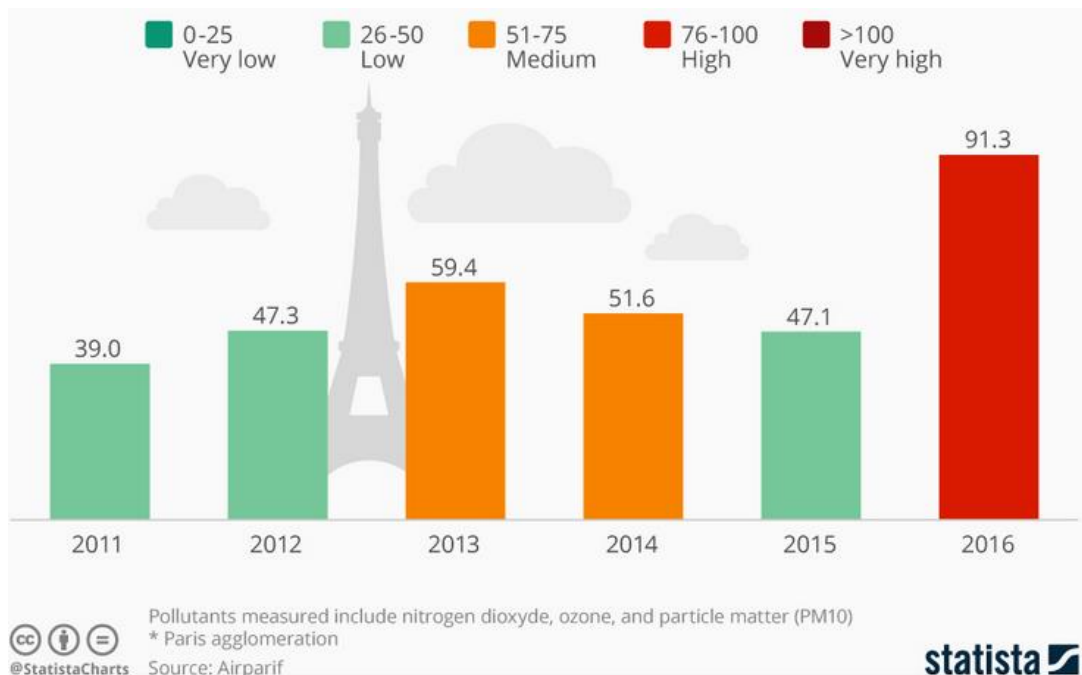
Source: Statista, 2016

If we add to this analysis the immense efforts made by France in order to organise COP 21 in Paris, we might think that this country is a real champion among the EU. The voice of the president Macron, a supporter of environment protection, is always heard but it doesn't mean that everything is settled. The environmental protection minister, Nicolas Hulot, resigned few months ago for not being enough supported inside the government, with other words because the reforms that he wanted to impose other people decided that is not yet the time. It is known that the government policy is made by Emanuel Macron, the president who said that he wants to "make our planet great again". Despite few interesting initiatives like banning the plastic bags and cups, there are other voices who are saying that "France talks big but acts little. There are grand announcements which end in minimal decisions" (Euractiv, 2018).

The fact that they had 13 people at the head of minister of environment in the last 20 years is relevant as well in term of political and programmes consistency. Each of them came to put in place a new objective and sometime totally abandoned the predecessor's work.

Despite the positive efforts we have to accept as well that a target to reduce France's reliance on nuclear power for electricity to 50% from 75% has also been put aside until after 2025 – though Macron maintains this is necessary to ensure France meets its emissions targets.

If we only look at the quality of the air in Paris we can see that there is a lot to do behind the nice words.



Paris Air Pollution 2011-2016

Source: Statista, 2016

For sure the quality of air is not a problem that can be solved in year or two but it is worrying to see that actually the pollution of air almost doubled in the last years in Paris; the situation is the same in other big cities.

Another big scandal is the weed killer glyphosate, where even though there is some evidence about causing cancer the government hesitate to ban the product and accepted to stop its utilisation but over 3 years.

3. CONCLUSION

It is sure that taking open and clear decisions in the environment protection is a complicated but necessary task. Communicating this decisions and explaining the reasons on which they were taken is a complicated exercise in order to convince population to follow them. From a new chief of state or a politician perspective, a strategy of communication based on facts that can be checked is even more appreciated by the electors because every 4 or 5 years you have to present in front of them to ask a new mandate. It is also very important how to play with this strategy, because it looks that Mr. Trump even though he is an environmental skeptic (only to say that he doesn't really care about environment) he promised to bring back the coal industry and he kept he's promise; this make him appears as man of honour. But doing this despite of the few others billions of people needs of a clean planet, is it really a virtue? Not at all but with a good communication team he succeeded to make a lot of Americans to believe it is.

On the other side of the political cheeseboard we have a very talented environment communication speaker, France president- Emanuel Macron. Is it really trustable at least by his citizens? Is he put in

place what he promised? The answer is negative to both questions. His popularity is slowly going down (it is true, environment is not the only reason) and just talking without concrete actions cannot fool the people on long term.

Therefore we think there is a strong need of action, direct communication in which specialists from social marketing should be involved in order to aim the correct channel through people mind. Nevertheless we have to bear in mind that communication without facts is worthless on long term and the first occasion to wake up citizen participation is the next COP in Katowice at the end of this year.

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