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Climate Policy Integration on the National and Regional Level: A Case Study for Austria and Styria

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ABSTRACT

Many climate-relevant decisions are taken in other policy areas with only little regard to climate change impacts. In order for climate policy to be successful it has to be integrated in decision-making and legislative processes in basically all policy areas and all levels of government. We analyse the extent of climate policy integration (CPI) in Austrian policy-making via in-depth expert interviews, both on the federal level as well as on the regional level using Styria as case study. The results show a broad range of perceptions regarding the degree of CPI in Austria. The consideration of climate policy issues generally depends on the core competence of the respective institution. Moreover, we found widely diverging views on whether CPI in Austria is too ambitious or too weak. Especially, potential negative impacts of climate policy on competitiveness or employment are seen to hamper a more ambitious implementation of mitigation policies.

Keywords: Climate Policy Integration, Austria, Survey

JEL Classifications: C83, Q48, Q54, Q58

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change represents the most exigent environmental problem our societies face. According to a special Eurobarometer survey (EC, 2017) 92% of the European population recognise climate change as a serious problem, 74% even consider it as very serious. The rise by 5 percentage points compared to the previous survey in 2015 suggests an increasing consensus about the importance of the issue. For Austria specifically, 68% regard climate change as a very serious problem. When asked to name the single most serious problem facing the world, climate change ranks third (after poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water and international terrorism), with 43% of EU citizens (50% of Austrian citizens¹) considering it as one of the most serious global problems.

Almost half of the Europeans (60% of Austrians) report that they have personally taken action to reduce emissions. But four out of ten citizens state that the responsibility for tackling climate change lies mainly with national governments (43%), the EU (39%) and business and industry (38%). Moreover, as of 2017 22% of the

population state that they are personally responsible and one in five say that all actors are responsible for tackling climate change. Somewhat divergently, Austrians see the main responsibility for tackling climate change with business and industry (49%) followed equally by the EU and the Austrian government (45% each).

In order to successfully limit climate change it has to be recognised that climate policy is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be firmly integrated into general and sector-specific policy areas that frame economic activity and societal development (Kok and de Coninck, 2007; Ahmad, 2009; Mickwitz et al., 2009; Kettner et al., 2015). Many climate-relevant decisions are taken in conventional areas with only little regard to climate change impacts.

The main targets and the general framework for climate policy are defined at EU level. The specific implementation and choice of instruments is, however, mainly decided at the level of member states². The EU aims at cutting its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compared to 1990 by 20% by 2020 and by

¹ This figure declined by three percentage points compared to 2015 results.

² One exception is the EU ETS, the emission trading scheme for industry and energy supply.

40% by 2030 respectively (COM (2008) 30; COM (2014) 15); for 2050 a reduction of 80% is envisaged (COM (2011) 112). The corresponding short and medium term targets for Austria were defined in the effort sharing decisions (Decision 406/2009/EC, COM (2016) 482) and imply a reduction target of 16% for 2020 and a proposed reduction of 36% for 2030 compared to 2005 in sectors not included in the EU ETS.

Climate policy in Austria is characterised by a wide range of policy instruments including regulatory requirements, economic instruments (mostly subsidies) and awareness-raising campaigns targeting different groups, sectors or activities. Given the cross-cutting nature of climate policy the institutional responsibilities are fragmented not only between various ministries (and executing agencies) but also between the federal government and the regional authorities. The provinces (Bundesländer) play an important role in climate policy in Austria as some climate-relevant issues (e.g., spatial planning, housing subsidies and building regulations) are in their jurisdiction.

In order for climate policy to be successful, the objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions or avoiding rising emissions as unintended side effects of other (non climate) policy interventions has to be integrated in decision-making and legislative processes in basically all policy areas and all levels of government, which is referred to as climate policy integration (CPI) in the literature (e.g., Mickwitz et al., 2009; Dupont and Oberthür, 2011).

The assessment of CPI is a rather new research area. Applied studies on CPI have been conducted for the EU level as well as for the national level. On EU level a number of studies have addressed CPI in sectoral policies, i.e., energy, water and biodiversity policies as well as in terms of the allocation of EU funds (Dupont and Oberthür, 2012; Dupont and Primova, 2011; Brouwer et al., 2013; Dupont, 2010; Hanger et al., 2013; Kettner et al., 2012). On the national level, research on CPI so far has concentrated on Germany (Beck et al., 2009³; Jacob and Kannen, 2015a; b), Finland (Kivimaa and Mickwitz, 2009³; Lyytimäki, 2011), the Netherlands (Bommel and Kuindersma, 2008³; van den Berg and Coenen, 2012) and Denmark (Wejs, 2014). These analyses generally show that while climate aspects are widely integrated in – especially high-level – policy strategies at Member State level, “political commitment to climate change mitigation has a rather low impact on everyday policy-making” (Jacob and Kannen, 2015b). Federalism generally seems to constrain the integration of climate aspects in other policy areas and coordination between the federal and the regional levels is often insufficient (e.g., Steurer and Clar, 2014a; Jacob and Kannen, 2005b).

For Austria CPI has been assessed by Steurer and Clar (2014a; b) and Niedertscheider et al. (2018). Steurer and Clar (2014a; b) analysed the integration of climate change mitigation issues in building policies. They discuss the role of federalism for Austria’s mitigation performance finding that federalism

constrained CPI by adding “a vertical dimension to an already complex horizontal integration” (Steurer and Clar, 2014a). The federal structure of Austria is, however, found to be only one of many factors constraining climate change mitigation in Austria. Niedertscheider et al. (2018) evaluate the level of CPI in Austria since 1990, discussing climate change mitigation measures like the introduction of relevant institutions or legislative acts against the background of other (frequently short-term) drivers of GHG-emissions. The analysis suggests that short-term socio-economic events like the financial crisis and climate events such as mild or cold winters exceeded the effects of climate policies on emissions. Yet, the effects of policies were more difficult to detect since they happened within longer time-frames and in conjunction with indirect climate change mitigation effects.

In this paper we aim at contributing to the research on CPI on Member State level focussing on Austria. We analyse the degree of CPI in Austrian policy-making via in-depth expert interviews. For our survey on CPI at the federal level we contacted representatives from the federal ministries involved in climate policy-related issues or affected by climate policy decisions as well as from special interest groups and other relevant stakeholders. For the analysis of CPI on the regional level we chose Styria as case study region and conducted interviews with relevant stakeholders and officials from the regional administration. The objective of the in-depth interviews was to obtain an overall impression from the point of view of various stakeholders regarding the quality of administrative cooperation on climate-related issues as well as the degree of CPI in Austria’s policy-making.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2 the methodological approach chosen to analyse CPI in Austria and Styria is set out. Section 3 describes the results on national and provincial level. The final section concludes the paper.

2. METHODS

CPI can be regarded as a continuation and advancement of approaches for environmental policy integration (EPI) in the 1980s and 1990s that aimed at contributing to the reduction of environmental problems and guiding the transition to sustainable development (Adelle et al., 2009; Jordan and Lenschow, 2010).⁴ EPI refers to the integration of environmental aspects and policy objectives into sector policies like energy and agriculture (Adelle et al., 2009)⁵. Based on the definition for EPI by Lafferty and Hovden (2003) CPI can be defined as⁶:

- The incorporation of the aims of climate change policy objectives into all stages of policy-making in all relevant policy sectors;
- Complemented by an attempt to aggregate expected consequences for climate change mitigation and adaptation

4 For a discussion of the relation of EPI and CPI see Adelle and Russel (2013).

5 However, this policy-making “principle” has not been unambiguously defined, neither in its normative sense nor in how it can be implemented in the political practice (Jordan and Lenschow, 2010).

6 This definition is also followed by Dupont and Oberthür (2011) and Mickwitz et al. (2009).

3 This study has been conducted in the PEER project, where Mickwitz et al. (2009) analysed climate policy integration in different EU member states and policy sectors as well as in a selection of case study regions and municipalities using five criteria (inclusion, consistency, weighting, reporting and resources).

into an overall evaluation of climate policy, and a commitment to minimise contradictions between climate policies and other policies.

According to this definition climate policy objectives are given priority in decisions in conventional policy areas⁷ and the integration should be reflected in general and sector-specific policy strategies as well as applied instruments and ideally in policy outcomes, i.e., a reduction of GHG emissions (Mickwitz et al., 2009).

Key features of policy integration are “policy coherence” and “policy coordination.” Policy coherence refers mainly to policy output and outcome⁸, i.e., the promotion of synergies and mutually reinforcing policy actions (win-win-solutions) such that non-conflicting, consistent incentives are provided by different policies (Mickwitz et al., 2009; Dupont and Oberthür, 2011; Kok and de Coninck, 2007). Policy coordination in turn emphasises the policy process that brings about policy coherence, i.e., the development of policies and programmes (for climate policy and other sectoral areas) that minimise redundancy, incoherence and lacunae (Peters, 1998).

Policy integration can be analysed from different angles, i.e., within or across government levels (Figure 1). Horizontal CPI focuses on mainstreaming climate policy objectives into other sectoral policy areas on one level of government (e.g., directorates-general on EU level, federal ministries). Vertical CPI, in contrast, takes a top-down approach and focuses on mainstreaming throughout multiple levels of government and policy-making (e.g., from EU directives to national implementation to local or regional implementation).

In this paper we analyse the extent of CPI in Austrian policy-making via the method of expert interviews. In a first step we identified the federal ministries with competencies that affect climate change mitigation (e.g., transport, economic affairs including energy) or are affected by climate policy decisions (e.g., consumer protection). The material linkage between climate policy and other policy areas is inherently more pronounced in some areas such as energy policy than in others like foreign policy. In addition, we included special interest groups (Austrian Economic Chambers, Chamber of Labour, Austrian Trade Union Federation, Federation of Austrian Industries) and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., the Austrian Environment Agency) in the group of interviewees. The objective of the in-depth interviews was to obtain an overall impression from the point of view of various stakeholders in order to evaluate the degree of CPI in Austria's policy-making. Table 1 summarises the institutions that were chosen for the interviews.

Table 1: Interview partners at the federal level

Federal administration	
BAK	Federal Chancellery
BMEIA	Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
BMLFUW	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
BMVIT	Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology
BMF	Federal Ministry of Finance
BMFWF	Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy
BMASK	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
Interest groups	
IV	Federation of Austrian Industries
WKO	Austrian Economic Chambers
AK	Austrian Chamber of Labour
ÖGB	Austrian Trade Union Federation
Relevant stakeholders	
EAA	Environment Agency Austria
AEA	Austrian Energy Agency
KLIEN	Climate and Energy Funds

Table 2: Interview partners at the regional level

Regional administration	
A13	Department of Environment and Spatial Planning
A15	Department of Energy, Housing and Technology
A16	Department of Transport and Provincial Building Infrastructure
Relevant stakeholders	
EAS	Energy Agency Styria

For the analysis of CPI on the regional level we chose Styria as case study region. The rationale for the selection is that Styria is the region in Austria that achieved the largest emission reduction in the period 1990 to 2015⁹. As on the national level, the evaluation of CPI on the regional level is based on in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders and decision-makers (Table 2).

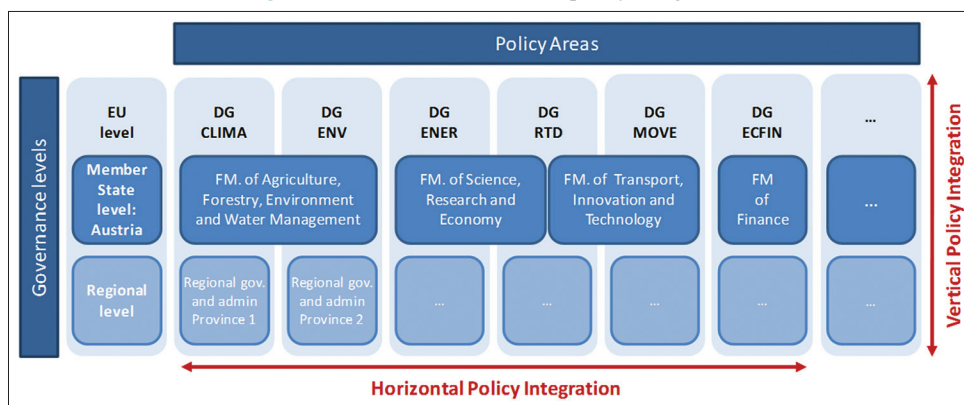
A total of 23 interviews were conducted between August and December 2017. The distribution between federal ministries, regional administration, special interest groups and other stakeholders is shown in Figure 2.

The interviews consisted of three parts. The first part dealt with the personnel resources dedicated to climate policy issues in each institution and the internal cooperation in this context. The second part concerned the cooperation with other institutions (administration and stakeholders). The third part included questions concerning CPI and the general relevance of climate policy as compared to other policy objectives. Furthermore, questions regarded the consideration of climate effects in designing policy instruments as well as the way in which trade-offs and conflicts are dealt with, i.e., how decisions are reached in cases of

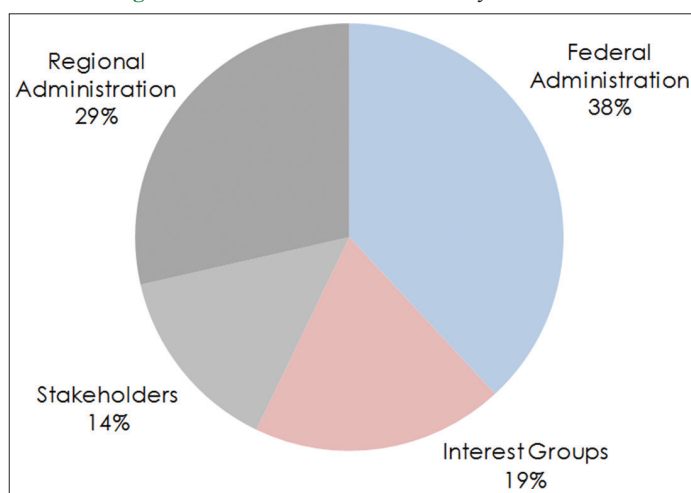
⁷ Dupont (2010) argues that giving climate policy principles priority over other non-environmental policy areas is justified, while within environmental policy synergies and avoiding conflicts with other environmental objectives should be emphasised.

⁸ Policy output refers to action taken by the administration in pursuance of policy decisions, i.e., the definition of regulation like standards, market-based incentives, etc., in order to influence the target group's behaviour. Policy outcomes refer to societal consequences of an implemented policy, i.e., the actual, observable change in behaviour, which, however, are less tangible and can also be influenced by other factors as well.

⁹ Latest year available. Only three provinces achieved a reduction of CO₂ emissions over this period (Styria, Lower Austria and Vienna). In Styria emissions have been reduced most strongly in the household sector, but also in energy supply. See UBA (2017).

Figure 1: Horizontal and vertical policy integration

Source: Own illustration adapted from Kettner et al. (2012)

Figure 2: Distribution of interviews by institution

conflicting interests. The respective interview outlines are included in the supplementary material.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Austria

3.1.1. Personnel resources

Personnel resources for climate issues differ strongly between Austrian ministries; while in some cases only single persons are in charge of these issues, in other cases whole departments are responsible for climate-related issues. Staff members working on climate policy or related issues are employed on different organisational levels (administrative staff, head of department, etc.). In general, however, more than one department is – at least indirectly – involved in climate policy-making.

The variations in personnel resources and the respective hierarchy level that is responsible also reflect the heterogeneous role of the topic for the particular ministries, i.e., it depends on the core responsibilities of the respective ministry – e.g., climate policy as a key area in the environment ministry versus functions only loosely related to or influenced by climate policy like consumer protection for instance. In individual sections of the same ministry the perception regarding the importance of climate policy can differ substantially.

Also with respect to Austrian business/industry and labour organisations (social partners) pronounced differences in the personnel resources for climate policy related issues can be found. This reflects also the diversity in the tasks the respective organisations have to fulfil, ranging from the coordination of opinions among members in the context of legislative consultation procedures to the work as think tank. In addition, it reflects the awareness regarding the importance of climate policy as well as the institution's perception regarding its role or influence in this issue.

3.1.2. Cooperation

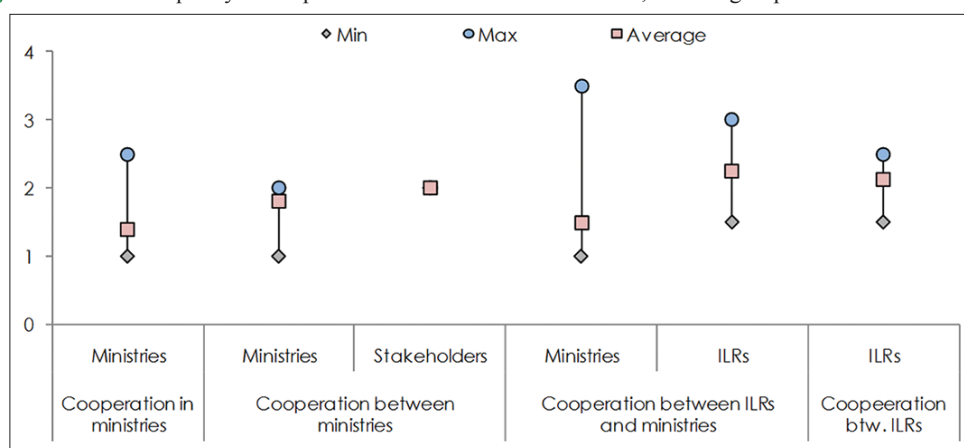
3.1.2.1. Cooperation within ministries

Internal cooperation in climate policy-related issues is differently organised in the ministries and departments, i.e., as informal exchange or in institutionalised meetings or processes (e.g., regular jour fixes etc.). The degree of institutionalisation in climate policy cooperation varies between ministries. Moreover, climate and energy issues often lie in the competence of different departments or sections. Communication and cooperation within the ministries is generally perceived to be good or very good by the officials, with some exceptions (Figure 3).

3.1.2.2. Cooperation between ministries

As a cross-cutting issue, climate policy related matters are in the responsibility of various ministries, which need to cooperate, e.g., for determining the Austrian position on EU legislative proposals. In Austria, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMFLUW) is legally responsible for climate policy issues, but climate-related issues are distributed across several ministries (energy policy, for instance, lies in the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, BMWFW)¹⁰. The collaboration of federal ministries is partly related to concrete tasks (statements in legal consultation processes, preparation for council working groups) and informal (in informal meetings or via phone calls, emails,

¹⁰ It has to be noted that after the completion of the interviews and following the formation of a new government the allocation of responsibilities between ministries was shifted and ministries are now named differently e.g., the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management is now the Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism. It was also assigned the responsibility for energy policy. Following this rearrangement of competences the aggregation of climate and energy policy in one ministry offers scope for more integrated policy-making.

Figure 3: Perceived quality of cooperation between federal ministries, interest groups and other stakeholders

Source: Own calculations. For the evaluation of the quality of cooperation, the experts could choose between the categories very good (1), good (2), not so good (3) and poor (4)

etc.). Partly the cooperation occurs in formalised committees (High Level Group for Energy and Climate Policy, Steering Group of the Austrian Integrated Climate and Energy Strategy (IKES), Climate Council, Coordination Panel Clean Energy in Transport) and theme-specific technical working groups.

Cooperation in climate policy issues between the ministries was generally rated as being good by the interviewees (Figure 3). Nevertheless, the quality of inter-ministerial cooperation was judged differently in individual departments.

Interests of the ministries are diverging strongly in some areas, which is also reflected in the perceived quality of their cooperation. In addition, some officials, lobbyists and stakeholders considered individual ministries to be strongly influenced by various lobbying interests. Conflicting interests were frequently seen to be a source of blockades, resulting e.g., in problems in the implementation of EU directives in Austria. Between some ministries respondents reported a high level of distrust, hampering everyday collaboration. However, it was frequently stated that the quality of cooperation strongly depends on the persons involved, on the one hand, and that there can be large differences between informal exchanges and contacts under formal, institutionalised circumstances, on the other hand.

Potential adverse effects on competitiveness and employment are arguments frequently used against climate policy. As regards content, the cooperation between ministries was often rated difficult due to the conflicting interests, while in many cases it was rated good on the personal level. Especially at the technical or administrative level, the exchange is found to be strong; on the political level it depends on the individual ministers' commitment. One respondent felt that the flow of information was not optimal, that information was withheld or decisions were taken in his absence and without involving his ministry respectively.

However, the quality of cooperation between the individual ministries was perceived to have altered over time. After the Paris agreement (UNFCCC, 2015) and due to activities on EU

level (climate targets, legal framework), climate policy was being increasingly perceived as important and generally moves up on the political agenda.

On ministerial level and in actual policy-making, many interviewees felt that climate policy receives only little attention. The lack in commitment by the decision-makers was also seen to translate into a lack of overall coordination or integrated energy and climate policy strategy.

Regarding the conflicts of interest mentioned, it remains to be seen whether the formal integration of energy policy in the ministry responsible for climate policy (Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism) will also improve the integration in actual policy-making and help resolve some of the perceived barriers for climate policy implementation.

3.1.2.3. Cooperation between ministries, social partners and other stakeholders

In Austria industry and labour representatives (ILRs; mostly social partners) are involved in formal processes dealing with climate policy such as the IKES as well as in legislative consultation processes. In addition, many ministry departments also have informal contacts and exchange with the lobbying groups. Some stakeholders were found to be closely linked with particular ministries due to overlapping interests or more formal links¹¹. Conflicts of interest between climate policy issues and other goals are again most strongly perceived in the areas of competitiveness and employment, i.e., more stringent climate policy might reduce firms' cost competitiveness and lead to carbon leakage, implying also job losses, as well as in distributional impacts. Conflicting or synergetic objectives are reflected in the perceived quality of the cooperation, as well as in the degree of trust between the parties.

Some respondents thought of interest groups as "gatekeepers" with particular interests, noting that they are caught in their

¹¹ The Federal Environment Agency for instance performs tasks in public interest on behalf of the Environment Ministry.

lobbying work and would communicate only the lowest common denominator of their members, but not deliver any concrete suggestions for solutions.

3.1.2.4. Cooperation between business/industry and labour representatives

In the context of climate policy, positions of industry and labour representatives may be consistent or diverging. In general, social partners may have similar positions regarding labour and economic growth, i.e., a coalition of social partners “under the keyword jobs” can be perceived. Issues without a common basis are often excluded from the discussions between different interest groups and if the positions of the groups do not match, no common statements are drafted. Cooperation is more intense between organisations representing the same interests (e.g., business and industry representatives) as compared to cooperation between employers’ and the employees’ organisations.

3.1.3. CPI and weighting of climate targets

3.1.3.1. Relevance of climate policy compared to other targets

Most respondents thought that the general awareness in the administration for climate change has increased during the last years, also as a result of the 2015 Paris Agreement, even though one interviewee pointed out that climate policy issues today are less relevant than prior to the economic crisis. Nevertheless, according to the officials involved directly in climate policy, the awareness in some departments or sections remains low. It was noted that the Austrian climate and energy policy agenda to a large extent is determined by the EU; this was often seen positively as important driver for Austrian policy-making. Some ministries, however, criticised that the EU policy framework has a stronger focus on climate issues, including quantitative targets, as compared to other policy targets such as economic growth.

There are considerable differences between the interviewees regarding the perceived relevance given to climate policy targets as compared to other policy targets in Austria ranging from too low to exaggerated: On the one hand, other objectives were regarded to be of higher priority and climate issues was considered by tendency to be subordinated to the “core issues” of the ministries. On the other hand, it was stressed that conflicts of interest between climate policy and other policy targets have to be bridged and that all policy goals should have the same relevance without giving priority to climate issues. Another respondent noted that generally specific goals were negotiated, without any clear prioritisation and no integrated policy approach was taken. According to the majority of officials hence there is scope to increase the weight given to climate policy compared to other policy targets (Figure 4).

All interviewees from business/industry and labour representatives reported that climate policy gained in importance in their institutions, in some it is now also dealt with at management level. The conceived level of relevance varies, however, among the organisations. Moreover it was noted that the organisation’s awareness depends on the current level of concern of the represented clientele. Compared to the ministry officials and stakeholders, the interest groups, however, perceived that

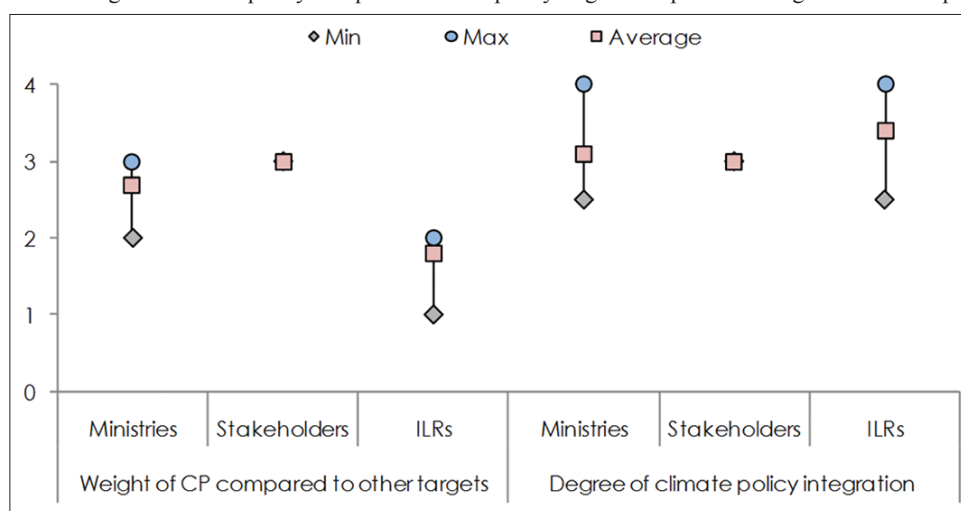
a higher weight is given to climate policy as compared to other policy targets. They called for an integrated, balanced approach to climate policy taking particularly competitiveness and employment concerns into account. The lobbying groups found both, synergies and conflicts between climate policy and other objectives. In the short term conflicts dominate, while in the long term synergies become more relevant. The development of public transport, thermal retrofitting as well as research, development and innovation were named as the most relevant synergetic fields, while competitiveness concerns, employment, distribution and taxes were among the conflicting areas. Target conflicts could be solved through technical and socioeconomic innovations as well as research policy, including the promotion of applied research.

The stakeholders like the Federal Environment Agency or the Austrian Energy Agency have the most critical view on the relevance of climate policy compared to other policy targets. They noted that so far no national targets have been developed (in addition to those derived from EU legislation), that the integrated energy and climate strategy has still not been published (thus leading to a lack of a comprehensive framework for policy or investment decisions on national level) and that the issue of climate change has no relevance at government level. On the contrary, they stated that while climate policy in principal is embedded in the Austrian policy landscape, the importance of the issue has declined markedly since the economic and financial crisis.

3.1.3.2. Degree of CPI in Austria

The different groups of interviewees shared a quite common opinion on the degree of CPI in Austria and saw potential for improvement (Figure 4). With respect to the perceptions of ministry officials and industry and labour representatives, however, a larger spread is observed. In both groups, at least some of the interviewees stated that climate policy is only poorly integrated into the overall policy landscape in Austria, while some thought that the degree of CPI is neither particularly high nor notably low.

As a final question the interviewees were asked to name what in their opinion would be a prerequisite for a successful climate policy in Austria. The answers largely fell into four categories: First, several respondents emphasised the importance of taking a comprehensive, systemic approach to climate policy, considering synergies as well as conflicts and increasing CPI. A second line of answers regarded the institutional framework – arguing that a state secretary for climate policy or climate protection in constitutional rank would increase the weight given to this issue. Most prominent was, however, the demand for drafting the IKES as soon as possible in order to put climate policy targets beyond question and define a comprehensive and long-term framework for national measures. Furthermore, the discussions regarding climate policy should be more evidence-based instead of ideological and take into regard the scientific foundation. Finally, concerning the implementation of climate policy the actual measures should ensure the achievement of targets. Climate policy should also be understood to offer chances, especially when there is a focus on R&D and innovation. But also fiscal instruments were regarded as essential part of the instrument mix.

Figure 4: Perceived weight of climate policy compared to other policy targets and perceived degree of climate policy integration

Source: Own calculations. For the evaluation of the weight of climate policy compared to other policy targets, the experts could choose between the categories “more important” (1), “equally important” (2), “less important” (3) and “not important” (4). With respect to the degree of climate policy integration in Austria experts could choose between “very good” (1), “good” (2), “not so good” (3) and “poor” (4).

3.2. Case Study Styria

3.2.1. Organisational structure of the regional administration in climate policy issues

Also for the case study region Styria the interview partners were chosen from those departments and units of the public administration that are directly or indirectly involved in climate policymaking on the regional level. Climate policy-related issues in this Austrian province are generally dealt with in two larger departments, A15 “energy, housing and technology” and A16 “transport and provincial building infrastructure.” The first department comprises competencies on energy issues, housing subsidies as well as climate policy issues in a narrow sense. A16 in turn is responsible for transport related issues (including transport infrastructure and e-mobility) as well as the public building infrastructure in Styria. Additional climate policy-related issues lie in the responsibility of department A13 “environment and spatial planning.”

The personnel resources related to climate policy in the different departments and units vary just as at the federal level, depending on the scope of their work. In some units and departments, only single individuals are directly involved in climate policy issues, while in other cases whole units directly work on climate policy. Indirectly, the work of whole departments like transport and building infrastructure is of relevance in terms of climate policy.

3.2.2. Cooperation

3.2.2.1. Cooperation within departments

Cooperation within the departments of the Styrian administration, on the one hand, arises out of particular occasions such as concrete administrative procedures or the development of regional strategies like the Integrated Styrian Energy and Climate Strategy 2017 or the development of the Styrian Adaptation Strategy 2012. On the other hand, cooperation takes the form of recurring activities, as in case of the preparation of the provincial energy reports for monitoring the Styrian Energy Strategy 2017 or regular exchange in the form of Jour Fixes, departmental workshops, etc.

Cooperation occurs within as well as between different units, for instance when the energy-related criteria for housing subsidies are jointly determined by the unit responsible for housing subsidies and the unit responsible for energy technology. In this context many interviewees pointed out the advantage of bundling a broad range of competencies under a single provincial secretary for cooperation (e.g., between housing and energy issues).

The quality of cooperation in the different units and departments generally rated good or even very good by the respondents. Some interviewees, however, noted that there were only few points of contact with other units, which resulted in a lower rating (Figure 5).

3.2.2.2. Cooperation between departments

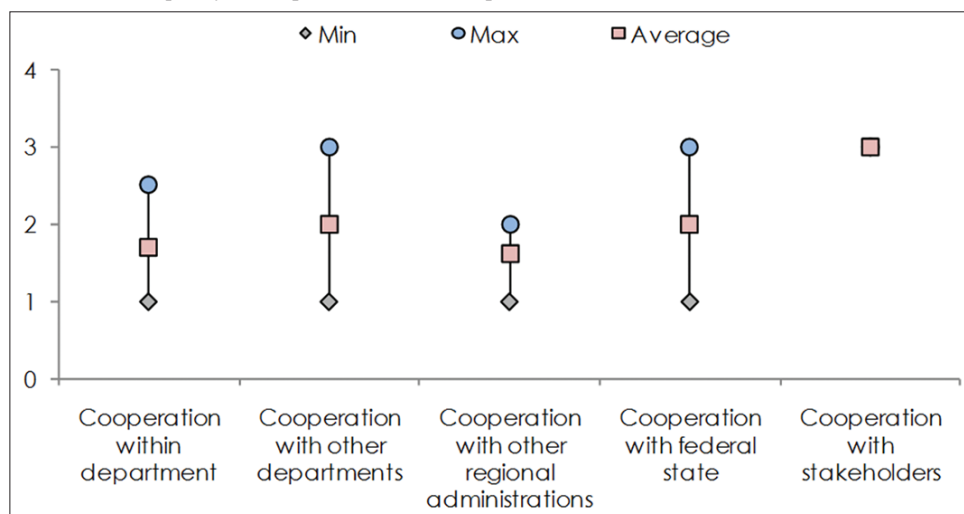
The exchange with other departments is both related to specific tasks and continuous, for instance in form of regular Jour Fixes with politicians or the Jour Fixe of the Heads of Department. In the development of overarching strategies a broad involvement of all relevant departments and units was strived for by the lead department. Nevertheless some of the other departments were missing integrative efforts.

The joined implementation of measures was generally seen to be consensual and rated good. Nevertheless, the respondents that also in the field of climate policy the targets as well as the pace of the implementation of measures were determined on the political level.

3.2.2.3. Cooperation with other provinces

The officials reported many contacts with their counterparts in other provinces. Again, these take both the form of regular meetings such as the meetings of different categories of administrative officials (e.g., meeting of provincial climate protection representatives (“Landesklimaschutzbeauftragte” or the meeting of environmental attorneys) as well as working groups on particular issues.

The quality of collaboration was generally rated as good, especially on the personal level, although it was reported that often provincial

Figure 5: Perceived quality of cooperation between departments, other administrative entities and stakeholders

Source: Own calculations. For the evaluation of the quality of cooperation, the experts could choose between the categories very good (1), good (2), not so good (3) and poor (4)

officials have to represent particular political interests. Some respondents thought that the level of cooperation has decreased due to changes in the structure of state and provincial administrations.

3.2.2.4. Cooperation with the federal state

According to the interviewees the frequency and quality of cooperation with the federal state depends strongly on the ministries involved as well as on the nature of the specific task. The contact between the federal administration and the provinces is partly organised via those provincial departments explicitly in charge of climate policy issues that in turn seek expert opinions from other provincial departments (as for the Austrian IKES), partly the relevant departments are contacted directly (e.g., in the context of expert working groups) and partly the federal government is gathering comments on specific strategies or legislative proposals.

Some respondents noted that the federal state primarily acts independently, excluding the provinces from the debate, unless the political support of the federal states was required. Contrarily, some ministries would increasingly try to get the provinces on board in order to improve their comparably weak position in political negotiations. On the personal level the contact with the federal administration is, however, rated good, albeit in some cases rare.

3.2.2.5. Cooperation with interest groups

Cooperation between the Styrian administration and stakeholders and interest groups takes different forms and intensities, i.e., for some departments the contacts are limited to particular events while others try to involve a broad range of stakeholders in the development of strategies and regulations. Often, the views of the interest groups were found to be diverging from the administration's. However, in cases when the interest groups pursue the same goals, cooperation was rated as good. Overall, respondents noted that the quality of cooperation with the interest groups as a whole is difficult to rate and tends to be problematic.

3.2.2. CPI and weighting of climate targets

3.2.2.1. Relevance of climate policy compared to other targets

The relevance of climate policy issues vis-à-vis other political targets was conceived heterogeneously by the respondents. Nevertheless, the majority notes that the weight given to climate issues compared to other goals is a political decision and is very much contingent on the respective context.

The interviewees stressed that the relevance given to climate issues differs strongly between the other sectoral policy areas: While progress is made in agriculture (especially with respect to adaptation to climate change) and in the buildings sectors, where Austrian provinces have succeeded in defining ambitious standards, climate change is not yet recognised as an issue in tourism or economic policy in Styria. As regards transport, the opinions of the respondents were mixed: Some noted that the ongoing extension of the road infrastructure is expected to lead to a further increase in transport volumes, that public transport infrastructure is only poorly developed in rural regions of the province, and that so far there are no public investments in battery charging infrastructure for e-mobility. Others highlighted progress made in terms of explicit preferential treatment of public via individual motorised transport in some urban areas, implying i.a. a reduction of parking spaces.

Conflicts were also identified with regard to the current discussion on affordable housing and the corresponding calls for lower thermal quality standards in order to reduce investment costs that would have detrimental effects on long-term energy conservation. One interviewee, however, pointed out that the concept of life cycle analysis is slowly gaining ground. In general, the implementation of mitigation measures, that are planned and ready to be applied, is to a certain extent seen as contingent upon the availability of financial resources. Also with respect to air pollution, control conflicts were found and in turn the installation of biomass heating systems has been restricted in areas with high and persisting concentrations of particulate matter.

In case of target conflicts the different goals are usually weighted in long (inter-departmental) discussions. Ultimately the decision-making and the balancing of interests fall in the political sphere and tend to be rather intransparent.

The division of competencies between the provincial level and the municipal level was noted as a factor constraining mitigation efforts of the province: While energy planning was introduced by the province, the respective adaptation of spatial planning lies in the competence of the municipalities, which tend to follow other interests.

Overall, the relevance of climate policy as compared to other policy issues was rated low (Figure 6) by the vast majority of respondents. Or put differently “climate protection is not always actively pursued.”

3.2.2.2. Degree of CPI in Styria

The degree of CPI in Styria was generally considered as low. That a single provincial representative is in charge of climate and energy issues was, however, seen as a positive factor for the integration of these policy areas. Climate aspects also gain in importance in other policy areas such as agriculture and water management. Yet the majority of respondents doubted that currently sufficient action is taken to tackle climate change. It was also noted that concepts for the implementation of additional climate protection measures are available but the necessary funding is not granted.

3.2.2.3. Degree of CPI in Austria

CPI on the federal level is conceived even more critical (Figure 6). The failure to issue the Integrated Climate and Energy Strategy (IKES) was given as an example for the lack in ambition in federal climate policy. It was noted that only little attention is generally devoted to the topic by policymakers in Austria, not only in effective policy-making but also in the respective election campaigns.

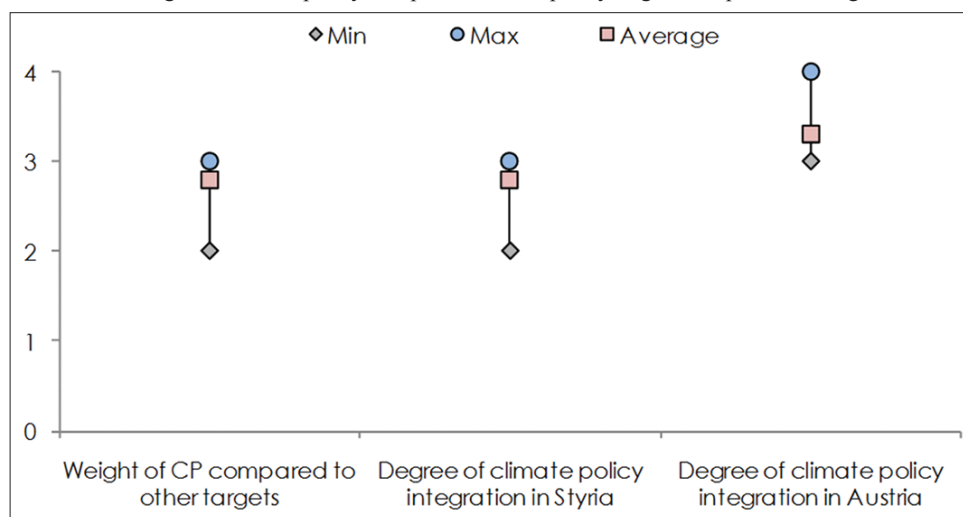
EU legislation was seen as a pacemaker for Austrian climate policy with EU regulation getting continuously more ambitious. The federal structure of Austria was mentioned as a factor preventing the swift implementation of EU directives. It was noted that climate policy efforts in Austria have slowed down over the last years which was in stark contrast to the increasingly ambitious goals. The integration of agriculture and environment into one ministry added as another explicit factor hampering CPI in Austria. Climate policy in Austria – according to respondents’ views – consists mainly of declarations of intention, but is characterised by a substantial lack in implementation effort.

When asked for the prerequisites for a successful climate policy in Styria and Austria, also on the regional level the respondents emphasised the importance of taking a comprehensive and systemic approach to climate policy-making. Just as at the federal level, a timely drafting of the IKES was mentioned as an important framework condition. Moreover, many interviewees stressed that the climate policy targets should be taken seriously and put beyond question. This also implies implementing inconvenient measures that go beyond picking the low-hanging fruit.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The key target stipulated by the Paris agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels. Mitigating climate change requires a thorough reorganisation of production and consumption patterns which basically translates into net zero emissions by mid-century. Successful climate policy requires that the objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions or avoiding rising emissions as unintended side effects of other (non-climate) policy interventions has to be integrated in decision making and legislative processes in basically all policy areas and all levels of government. The recognition of the cross-cutting nature of climate policy and the consideration of emission impacts of other policy areas are subsumed under CPI.

Figure 6: Perceived weight of climate policy compared to other policy targets and perceived degree of climate policy integration



Source: Own calculations. For the evaluation of the weight of climate policy compared to other policy targets the experts could choose between the categories “more important” (1), “equally important” (2), “less important” (3) and “not important” (4). With respect to the degree of CPI in Austria experts could choose between “very good” (1), “good” (2), “not so good” (3) and “poor” (4).

In order to assess the degree of CPI in Austria on the federal and regional level we conducted a survey among officials in administration as well as representatives from social partners, other special interest groups and stakeholders. The interviews contained questions regarding the personnel resources dedicated to climate policy issues in each institution, the internal and external cooperation as well as the general relevance of climate policy as compared to other policy objectives.

The results show a broad range of perceptions regarding the degree of CPI in Austria. On the one hand, the consideration of climate policy issues depends on the core competence of the respective institution. On the other hand, we found widely diverging views on whether climate policy in Austria is too ambitious or too weak. Especially, potential negative impacts of climate policy on competitiveness or employment are seen to hamper a more ambitious implementation of mitigation policies.

Cooperation is generally rated as good, especially at the personal or informal level. However, conflicts of interest that result from the organisations' core functions negatively impact on the perceived quality of cooperation. In case of conflicting targets it is widely noticed that "traditional" policy objectives like employment or competitiveness are given priority compared to climate concerns. The failure to effectively integrate climate aspects in other policy areas is reflected in the development of Austria's greenhouse gas emissions. After a slight decline between 2006 and 2014 emissions have been growing again. Overall, greenhouse gas emissions amounted to 79.7 Mt CO₂e in 2016 which is one Mt above the level of 1990. Thus, at present it seems doubtful if Austria will be able to meet the 2020 emission reduction target for the Non-ETS sectors (UBA, 2018).

A stronger institutional framework for climate policy, e.g., a state secretary for climate policy or climate protection in constitutional rank, could increase the weight given to this issue. Most importantly, the publication of an integrated long-term climate and energy policy strategy is required in order to put climate policy targets beyond question and develop a set of concrete measures that ensure the achievement of mitigation targets. Regarding the conflicts of interest it remains to be seen whether the formal integration of energy policy in the ministry responsible for climate policy (Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism) will improve the integration in actual and help resolve some of the perceived barriers for climate policy implementation.

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