

# REPORT

## Prague Climate Talks: The future of Czech coal regions

Friday September 6, 2019, 16:00-17:30  
European House, Jungmannova 24, Praha

- **The tenth debate from our cycle Prague Climate Talks took place on Friday 6th September 2019 in the European House. This project is co-organised by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Prague, under the auspices of the UN Information Centre Prague.**
- **The topic of this debate was “The future of Czech coal regions”. The speakers were: Martin Kaiser, Director of Greenpeace Germany, Martina Weissová from the RE:START programme and Martin Hausenblas, politician and entrepreneur. The debate was moderated by Kateřina Davidová from EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy.**

**Martin Kaiser** began by his presentation about the progress of global warming and what changes we can already see in Europe. Keeping the pledges of the Paris Agreement will be vital for achieving the low-carbon transformation. At the same time, it is important to think about the regions that will be impacted by this process more strongly than others, i.e. the so-called coal regions. This was one of the reasons why the German Coal Commission was established and prepared a plan how Germany will gradually phase out coal before 2038. Part of this plan are compensations for energy companies and investments into the creation of new jobs in the regions, where coal mining and burning is linked to many workers' lives. Kaiser is being optimistic and believes that even without coal, these regions

can experience sustainable economic growth, without the environmental burden.

**Martina Weissová** then spoke about the governmental programme RE:START, which has been running since 2015 and which has since then presented three action plans for the development of Czech coal regions. At the European level, the Platform for Coal Regions in Transition has been established and RE:START is regularly in touch with its representatives. For the Czech Republic, this means CZK 8 billion of investment into areas such as the support of small businesses, protection of the environment, reduction of emissions or health care.

**Martin Hausenblas** then presented his vision of how the Czech Republic could transition to low-carbon economy. According to him, Czechs should be more proactive in finding more ecological ways of living and also be investing more into new technologies. For example, the region of Ústí nad Labem would benefit from the introduction of a high-speed rail track between Dresden and Prague, which would move it from the periphery to the centre. Similarly, all regional capitals should be connected to Prague. Technological innovations come in leaps, according to Hausenblas, and the Czech Republic with its cautious approach to renewable energy and e-mobility is risking

being left behind. As an alternative to coal, Hausenblas sees a combination of water power plants and agro-photovoltaic. In order to bring prosperity to the regions, it is first and foremost necessary to give them an attractive vision.

A discussion with the audience ensued, with questions related to for example the future of the automotive industry, participation of local communities in planning processes and the ways to deal with emissions reductions in countries outside of the EU, such as Brazil or China.