

CLIMATE, ENERGY AND THE GREEN DEAL IN THE CZECH CHAIN MAILS

WHAT NARRATIVES ARE SPREAD
ABOUT THE GREEN POLITICS OF THE
EU IN THE CZECH CHAIN MAILS?

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As a part of the IRI's Beacon project [initiative](#), **EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy** analysed narratives spread about the European Green Deal (EGD) and green policies through the Czech chain emails. The emails were collected by the [Czech Elves](#), a citizen's movement of volunteers from various backgrounds that collect and confront disinformation spread by both foreign and domestic actors. The emails analysed for this piece were from the period between November 2021 and October 2022 and were filtered with a predefined search on the website by using the tag "green politics". During the monitoring period, a filtered search showed 375 unique emails with the selected criteria. The following sections will describe the general properties of these emails and what narratives were identified within them. In addition, short explanations of what is misleading in these emails and what we know based on verifiable facts can be found in the last section. The identified narratives will be further analysed and compared to Czech and Slovak mainstream and disinformation-spreading media during the next stages of the project and the conclusions will be available on the IRI's Beacon project [initiative](#) website.

General observations

During the monitoring period, the search showed the highest number of results in November 2021 (60), followed by February (56) and January (48). The lowest number of results was found in October (8) and September (14). However, emails can be caught and added to the database later than the date they were spread; thus, there can be more results for these months after the end of the monitoring period. The higher number of results in particular months is likely tied to some significant world or Czech affairs, such as the start of the Russian war in Ukraine or the rise of energy prices in the Czech Republic. However, it is important to note that the database counts emails with different subject lines but the same content separately, hence the data on how many original emails were produced in the given month is lacking.

"Green politics" chain emails often contain only pictures that vary in type. For instance, emails contained pictures with jokes and political satire or [pictures](#) of politicians with made-up quotes. There were also pictures supposed to highlight failures of modern green technologies, such as burning electric vehicles or parts of wind turbines shown as trash. [Another type](#) of mail included only a short text containing the link to either a Youtube video or to an article on another domain. In some cases, chain mail was using the text from an article as the main body. A few of the emails that were found in the database were written in the [Slovak language](#).

Compared to the sounding of some disinfo posts monitored in the [previous blog](#), many of the analysed chain emails contain more alarmist messaging and calls for action or even open rebellion. There are [instances](#) of emails that predict a complete apocalypse as a result of closing down coal mines, emails claiming that blackouts will occur across the whole of Europe or that power generation from fossil fuels is the only type of energy that can save Czechia from cold and hunger. Even more disturbing are the emails that are asking citizens to organise an uprising as the EGD is used to control citizens and orchestrate the energy crisis.

Identified Green Deal/green politics narratives

From the 375 emails with the "green politics" tag, 79 separate narratives could be tied to the EGD. From these, 5 repeating and overarching narratives can be identified:

1. Climate change denial

Emails that contained narratives denying man-made climate change were explaining the current global warming as something natural or caused by volcanic heat. Both the EGD and climate change were described as 'monsters' that were invented only to scare people after the pandemic. On a similar note, CO2 was described as 'useful' for the planet and hysteria around it as a 'hoax'.

2. Germany (or less often the US) is responsible for the energy crisis.

In the monitored chain emails, Germany was the country most often blamed for the extensive energy crisis and lack of energy in the EU in general. In addition, Germany was also blamed for partially causing the crisis of energy supplier, Bohemia Energy, in the Czech Republic. It was also stated that the EGD is a German idea, that will make only Germany richer, but the rest of the EU will suffer. The United States was also mentioned as the orchestrator of the energy crisis, but this narrative was less common. On the contrary, Russia was described as a country that is not responsible for the high prices but rather as one that is trying to solve the crisis with Brussels and the US not allowing it. Russia was also described as a country that can serve as a good example of how countries should be approaching various green issues.

3. European Green Deal / green energy is responsible for high energy prices.

This narrative ties the increase in the prices of energy to the implementation of the EGD agenda or green policies of the EU in general. The EGD is presented as nonsense that has already weakened the EU's economy, as an economic suicide dictated by Brussels, and that the decisions of the EU policymakers are completely ideological without any scientific foundation. The energy market of the EU is described as dysfunctional, and the market is blamed for higher electricity prices in Czechia. Some emails only mention the ETS system rather than the EGD and call for its abolishment. The EGD is also being tied to poverty and future estimates of energy price rises of a hundredfold are presumed.

4. Green energy destroys Czech self-sufficiency.

The self-sufficiency of Czechia as a narrative was tied to either energy production topics or agricultural topics. 'Good old days' (before the EGD) were celebrated

because Czechia was allegedly able to produce its own energy for its citizens and grow its own food - something that is perceived to no longer be the case amongst this segment. However, the EGD imposed selling of the energy outside of the Czech Republic, leading to Czech agriculture and food production also suffering as a consequence of its implementation. Emails with the agricultural narrative were repeated regularly during the monitoring period and were often accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation showing data on food grown in Czechia in the past. The Farm to Fork Strategy was also described as something that is not going to work and that will even further lower agricultural production in the EU. The EU is in this narrative seen as the villain that wants to destroy the food market.

5. EU is controlling its citizens through energy policies

The narrative of the EU's abusive use of power and control over the citizens included the widest variety of subtopics. The European Green Deal was portrayed in this narrative as a form of dictatorship that will dictate how people are supposed to live, drive, and what they can eat and drink, or that it already does so. In some examples, the blame was shifted to Brussels rather than the EGD, and these emails contained alarmist messages. For instance, according to one email, Brussels allegedly decided people would have to turn off their electricity for a couple of hours a day and use only one electrical appliance at a given time. Another alarmist message claimed that blackouts are carefully planned as a weapon of mass destruction and that the Czech Republic will experience cold and dark months. One of the most repeated topics in these emails was the issue of electric cars. Not only is the EGD forcing us to drive them, but they are also inferior to the current models in all aspects.

Context to the main messages

Despite the causality between human activity and climate change has been scientifically proven and studies of an increased likelihood of extreme weather

events are widely available (for example [here](#) or [here](#)), our monitoring indicates there is still a part of society remaining very sceptical about the existence of the phenomena and human influence on it.

In relation to the energy crisis, Germany's and other countries' decisions can influence the EU energy market. However, without going into too many details about the functioning of this system, high energy prices can be attributed to a combination of different factors, including post-covid surge in global energy demand, less renewable energy in a given year, increased ETS price, market manipulation by [Gazprom](#), and others. Therefore, it cannot be attributed to a single decision of a country. Short summary of factors contributing to the high energy prices can be found [here](#) or [here](#).

The narratives that claim that the Czech Republic is losing its agricultural and energy self-sufficiency are also conveniently ignoring or even twisting some realities. The emails claiming the Czech Republic is forced to sell its produced electricity completely disregard the benefits of cross-country trading of electricity on the price. As energy storage capacities in the Czech Republic are not sufficient, the energy companies choose to participate in cross-border trade in an effort to better balance differences between consumption and generation. Moreover, electrical interconnection is a long-established way of enhancing the security of supply, thus, even the Czech Republic can [benefit](#) from the selling and buying of energy between the Member States (basic information about the functioning of the electricity markets can be found [here](#) and on EU regulation [here](#)). Concerning the Farm to Fork Strategy, one of its goals is to [support](#) more local production of food.

While the arguments about the current shortcomings of electric vehicles can, to a limited extent, be seen as valid, the reasoning behind the EU's support for decarbonising the transport sector also needs to be taken into consideration.

Transport emissions have been steadily rising, causing premature deaths across the world and other health issues. Thus, lowering these by supporting electric cars should also be seen as beneficial for the public as well as public budgets. Moreover, the decision to stop the sale of new CO₂-emitting cars in Europe by 2035 is not only still more than a decade away, but also, cars that were bought before that can be continuously used. More information about this plan can be found [here](#).

Conclusion

Communicating the EGD and its effects in a comprehensible way is a difficult task. Recent [sociological research](#) shows that this communication is already failing as the majority of Czechs believe that they know only 'a few things' about the EGD or 'almost nothing'. In addition, the same [research](#) shows that when asked about the future of the EGD, 1/3 of Czechs would support it, 1/3 would like to limit it (also includes answers for complete abolishment) and 1/3 can not say. The monitoring of the chain of emails related to the green policies of the EU confirms the importance of improving this communication. Although there were many examples of emails that spread completely false and easily refutable information, others were more challenging to dispute. These include examples that were, to a large extent, building on a real policy change or proposal, but were often exaggerating its negative impact or ignoring its complexity.

While the emails that contain environmental themes represent a small fraction of the total number of spread emails, they continue to be a relevant source of disinformation in the Czech Republic. According to the [Czech elves](#), chain emails in the Czech Republic continue to influence tens of thousands of people, and the main target group of this platform is usually the older generation. The emails can be also used as a medium for sharing articles that could otherwise go unnoticed

by some recipients. Thus, initiatives that monitor the chain mails and either explain or highlight their false negatives continue to be needed.



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