Key words

What: THE environment; ø global warming; THE climate crisis; THE EPA ; ø Congress; ø climate change

Type of document/ point of view

1. news article dealing with the weakening of the EPA by the Supreme Court 2. News article about the growth of renewables 2023 3. plus graph 4. poem: the challenge of climate change means a move from individuality to collective thought and action.

Centrale: The challenge of the climate crisis in the US

In her poem Earthrise, Amanda Gorman calls climate change "the single greatest challenge of our time". According to Scientific American, which published an article and a graph on 23 April 2023, the country is heading in the right direction in its move towards renewable energies. However, a 2024 article from The New York Times is more pessimistic, citing Supreme Court decisions that threaten the transition to a greener economy. To what extent is the US — its institutions and its population — up to the challenge ahead?

The challenge is huge, as Gorman points out. Not only does the issue frighten people ('scare you') but it also demands substantial action from everyone, whatever their position in society. The aim of the Paris Climate agreement of 2015 was to limit the rise of global temperatures to 2°C in the medium term, as Scientific American reminds us. Like all developed countries, the US thus needs to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and substantial efforts have already been made in achieving this, as discussed in the New York Times and Scientific American articles. The latter argues that a key step is greatly increasing the share of renewables in energy production, a path the US has begun to follow. The country is now producing more energy, much of which comes from renewables as detailed in both Scientific Americandocuments. Renewables even overtook coal in 2022 for electricity production, according to the graph. This shift is partly due to falling generation costs, largely driven by China’s manufacturing output. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act, described by The New York Times as the most ambitious environmental legislation in half a century, has spurred growth in the green energy sector.

However, significant obstacles remain. In its article, The New York Times explains that regulatory agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency face challenges from a conservative Supreme Court that has been proactive in undermining environmental standards. Furthermore, the newspaper adds that key legislation, notably The Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act are now more than fifty years old, so no longer fit for purpose. Yet Congress is paralysed, unable to pass new laws, while bipartisan agreement seems unlikely. What's more, even outside this institutional framework, there are many challenges. The Scientific American article and graph suggest that the US must triple its current electricity output to meet its goals particularly given the variability of renewables. However, doubts persist over whether American manufacturers can secure enough minerals to sustain progress, according to the same magazine. Last but not least, addressing climate change requires a radical change of mindset of the population. Indeed, in her poem, Gorman moves the reader from "you" and "I" as individuals to a new, collective position of "we": if we can see "our planet" as belonging to all of us, it may give us the strength to act.

 482 words

2. CCINP The challenge of the climate crisis in the US

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