Reducing carbon emissions: EU targets and measures

The EU is committed to drastically cutting harmful greenhouse gas emissions ©AP Images/European Union-EP

Read what measures the European Union is taking to meet targets to reduce carbon emissions in different sectors in order to prevent climate change.

To prevent dangerous climate change, the EU has pledged to bring about climate neutrality by 2050. This aim and an updated interim target for emission reductions by 2030 will become legally binding if the European Parliament and Council reach an agreement on the European Climate Law.

The Climate Law is part of the European Green Deal, the EU’s roadmap towards climate neutrality. The European Parliament has long pushed for more ambitious EU climate targets.
and adopted its position on the new legislation on 7 October 2020. Members call for the 2030 emission reduction target to be increased to 60% (compared to 1990 levels) from the current goal of 40% and for all EU countries to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

*Check out our infographic on the EU progress toward its climate change goals.*

To reach its climate goal, the European Union has come up with ambitious legislation.

**An Emissions Trading System for industry**

The EU's Emissions Trading System (ETS) aims to reduce the industry's carbon emissions by obliging companies to hold a *permit for each tonne of CO2* they emit. Companies have to buy them through auctions. There are some incentives to boost innovation in the sector.

The European Emissions Trading System is the world's first major carbon market and remains the largest one. It regulates about *40% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions* and covers approximately 11,000 power stations and manufacturing plants in the EU. The goal is to reduce emissions by 43% compared to 2005.

*Find out more about how the EU's Emissions Trading System works and how it is currently being reformed.*

**Tackling carbon emissions from other sectors**

Sectors not covered by the Emissions Trading System – such as transport, agriculture, buildings and waste management – still account for *approximately 60% of the EU's overall emissions*. Emissions from these sectors will be *cut by 30%* by 2030 compared to 2005.

This will be done through agreed *national emission targets* which are calculated based on countries’ gross domestic product per capita. Lower-income EU countries will be provided with support.

*Find out member states’ targets and how less wealthier EU countries will be supported.*

**Managing forests for climate change**

EU forests absorb the equivalent of *8.9% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions* each year. The EU wants to use this power to fight climate change.
New legislation aims to prevent emissions caused by deforestation and oblige each EU country to compensate changes in land use, which lead to emissions of CO2, by better managing or increasing their forests.

*Check out our infographic to learn how the EU uses forests to offset carbon emissions.*

**Reducing car emissions**

Cars and vans produce 15% of the EU’s CO2 emissions. The EU has adopted legislation to toughen car emissions standards, and Parliament is also calling for measures to facilitate the shift to electric and hybrid vehicles.

*Learn more about the new CO2 targets for cars.*

**Find out more**

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