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 as part of the Fit for 55 in 2030 package.

EU climate change goals

To tackle climate change, the European Parliament adopted the European Climate Law, which raises the EU’s 2030 emissions reduction target to at least 55% from 40% and makes climate neutrality by 2050 legally binding.
The Climate Law is part of the European Green Deal, the EU’s roadmap towards climate neutrality. To reach its climate goal, the European Union has come up with an ambitious package of legislation known as *Fit for 55* in 2030. It comprises 13 interlinked revised laws and six proposed laws on climate and energy.

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

### 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 about 10,000 power stations and manufacturing plants in the EU. To align the ETS with the emission reduction targets of the European Green Deal, the EU is working on an update of the scheme. Parliament wants emissions in the ETS sectors to come down 63% by 2030, from 2005 levels, compared with the European Commission's proposal of 61%.

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

### Cutting emissions from transport

**Emissions from planes and ships**

Civil aviation accounts for 13.4% of total CO2 emissions from EU transport. On 8 June 2022, Parliament backed a revision of the ETS for aviation to apply to all flights departing from the European Economic Area - which is made up of the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway - including those landing outside the area.

MEPs want used cooking oil, synthetic fuel or even hydrogen to gradually become the norm for aviation fuel. They want suppliers to start delivering sustainable fuel from 2025, reaching 85% of all aviation fuel in EU airports by 2050.

Parliament also wants to accelerate the decarbonisation of industry by extending the ETS to maritime transport.
More on EU measures to cut emission from planes and ships.

Road emissions cars

Cars and vans produce 15% of the EU’s CO2 emissions. Parliament backed the Commission proposal of zero emissions for cars and vans by 2035. Intermediate emissions reduction targets for 2030 would be set at 55% for cars and 50% for vans.

Learn more about the new CO2 targets for cars.

Parliament agreed to the introduction of carbon pricing for road transport and heating, usually referred to as ETS II. MEPs want businesses to pay a carbon price on products like fuel or heating oil, while regular consumers would be exempted until 2029.

Carbon pricing on imported goods

A carbon border adjustment mechanism would encourage companies in and outside the EU to decarbonise, by placing a carbon price on the imports of certain goods if they come from countries with less ambitious climate legislation. It is intended to avoid carbon leakage, which is when industries move production to countries with less strict greenhouse gas emissions rules.

As part of the Fit for 55 package, the European Commission proposed a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) in July 2021, which would apply a carbon levy on imports of certain goods from outside the EU. MEPs want it to be implemented from 1 January 2023, with a transitional period until the end of 2026 and full implementation by 2032.

Read more on preventing carbon leakage.

Tackling carbon emissions from other sectors

Sectors not covered by the current Emissions Trading System – such as transport, agriculture buildings and waste management – still account for about 60% of the EU’s overall emissions. The Commission proposed emissions from these sectors should be cut 40% by 2030 compared to 2005.
This will be done through agreed national emission targets in the effort sharing regulation. The national emission targets are calculated based on countries' gross domestic product per capita. Lower-income EU countries will be provided with support.

Under Fit for 55, buildings and road transport will be covered under both the effort sharing regulation and the new ETS.

Read more on the emissions reduction targets for each EU country.

Managing forests for climate change

EU forests absorb the equivalent of nearly 7% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions each year. The EU wants to use this power to fight climate change.

On 8 June 2022, the Parliament adopted its position on a proposed law to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve natural carbon sinks in the land use, land use change and forestry sectors. These sectors cover the use of soils, trees, plants, biomass and timber.

MEPs supported increasing the target for carbon sinks in the land use, land use change and forestry sectors, which would lead to an even bigger reduction of EU emissions than the 55% target set for 2030.

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

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