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EU climate target for 2040

Heat wave across Europe, EU credibility at stake ahead of climate conference in Brazil

The European Commission today (Wednesday, 2 July) presented its proposal for the climate target for 2040. The proposal aims to reduce CO2 emissions by 90% within the next 15 years compared to 1990 levels. The aim is to make the EU the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The EU Commission wants to enable Member States to offset 3% of their CO2 emissions through projects outside the EU. The Greens/EFA are extremely critical of outsourcing climate protection. It is necessary to provide certainty to investors and the economy on our way to reaching climate-neutrality by 2050. Outsourcing climate protection creates risks, but is also economically unwise; this would divert investment in battery production, solar cells and wind turbines away from the EU.

In the upcoming negotiations, the Greens/EFA will push for the highest possible climate target to protect citizens.

Bas Eickhout, Co-President of the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament, comments:

“The Greens/EFA has been calling for an ambitious 2040 climate target for years, so it is good the Commission has finally put a 90 per cent target on the table. With COP30 in November, there is no time to lose. This law must be passed before the UN deadline in September. Europe needs to show it is still serious about global climate leadership and push countries like China and India to follow suit.

“At the same time, the Commission is taking a dangerous gamble with international credits. Not only is their effectiveness highly questionable, their introduction is economic stupidity. Instead of spending tens of billions to buy paperwork, we should be investing in greening European industry. Europe should not be the continent that exports its climate responsibility, but the continent exporting climate solutions.”

Lena Schilling, shadow rapporteur for the Greens/EFA Group in the lead Environment Committee, comments:

“Ahead of the climate summit in Brazil, the EU’s credibility is at stake. The record-breaking heat of recent days makes it painfully clear that temperatures must come down fast. The higher the climate target, the

stronger the push to finally break our fossil addiction. It's thanks to the tireless protests of civil society and our demands to the European Commission that 90 percent is even on the table. Science is clear that 90 percent is the absolute minimum needed to seriously tackle the climate crisis. Every percentage point less equals as much CO_2 emissions as Denmark produces in a year.

"Conservatives blocked a more ambitious proposal not for policy reasons, but to weaken the Commission President from their own ranks. Already now they are talking about loopholes but the climate crisis is no abstract future threat, we can feel it today. In many regions, children already cannot go to school, and elderly people cannot even go outside because the heat has become a lethal danger. Wildfires, heatwaves, floods, we must ask ourselves what kind of world we want to live in by 2040. Because this climate target will decide whether that world is still livable. We need a strong 2040 climate target, no loopholes, no excuses, no delay."

Background:

The climate target for 2040 is enshrined in EU climate law. The record temperatures of recent days make the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions abundantly clear. In Spain, people are suffering from temperatures of up to 46 degrees Celsius. Last year was the warmest since records began and the first with an average temperature of over 1.5 °C.

Leading EU climate scientists are calling for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the EU of at least 90% by 2040 as an absolute minimum in order to meet the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement and lower temperatures. Every percentage point reduction means emissions savings of around 47 million tonnes of CO_2, equivalent to one year of Denmark's current emissions. Three percentage points are equivalent to one year of current emissions of Austria and Greece combined.

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