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Press release | 17.07.2026

European Commission significantly weakens its best weapon against climate change

European Emissions Trading System/ETS1

Around ten thousand people have died as a result of the heatwaves of recent months, and with its reform of the European Emissions Trading System (ETS) presented today (Friday, 17 July), the European Commission is putting forward a proposal to significantly weaken the exact market-based solution for climate action and the future of European industry. With this proposal, polluting industries will be able to emit more, for longer, and at a cheaper price. Among other things, the European Commission is proposing to increase the number of free allowances for CO_2 emissions, which runs counter to the market-based incentive for investment in renewable energy. At least, the ETS1 will also apply to private jets in future. This means that anyone flying on a private jet will have to pay for their CO2 emissions, just like, for example, passengers on intra-European flights.

Michael Bloss, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the leading Committee on the Environment, comments:

"The Commission gives industries a licence to pollute for even longer and at a lower cost. Anyone who undermines climate protection during this scorching summer has failed to recognise the signs of the times. Our children will foot the bill through compromises on their quality of life, health and freedom. Weakening the emissions trading scheme harms companies that create jobs and growth through climate-friendly production. Those who have invested in the industries and the jobs of the future will be penalised. Whether billions are invested or not is already being decided in boardrooms today. The proposal holds back investment and puts Europe's competition at risk.

At least there will be no free pass for private jet owners anymore. It is not acceptable that people flying within Europe on a regular flight dutifully pay a CO2 charge while private jets get a free pass."

Sara Matthieu, Greens/EFA coordinator of the Committee on the Environment and member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, comments:

"The heatwaves of recent months have claimed around ten thousand lives. The fact that the European Commission wants to significantly weaken its best weapon against climate change in the midst of this heatwave crisis is completely inconceivable.

"Putting a price tag on planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions motivates industries to shift from fossil to renewable energies. Free emission allowances are nothing more than subsidies for the fossil fuel industry.

Whoever spares polluters today leaves the bill for our children tomorrow. Companies that have spent years investing in greening and reducing emissions are being punished for their innovation, while the biggest polluters are rewarded."

Background

Since its introduction in 2005, the European Emissions Trading Scheme has generated revenue of just under 260 billion euros for EU Member States – billions that should be invested in the green economy, quality jobs and the decarbonisation of EU's industries.

At the same time, greenhouse gas emissions went down by more than 50% or over 2 billion tonnes of CO_2 compared to 2005 levels. This is equivalent to the annual emissions of about 450 million gas-powered cars or the energy used by roughly 260 million average homes for a year, a major success at fighting global heating.

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