

# Ask the IIEA

## What is the EU doing about Climate Change?



Future of the EU27



### Key Takeaways

- In international climate negotiations, the EU has been a driver of greater global ambition to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.
- The EU has a tripartite approach to climate change: the 2020 Climate & Energy Package, the 2030 Climate & Energy Framework, and the 2050 Long-Term Strategy.
- The 2030 Climate & Energy Framework was the EU's response to its commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement.
- The EU has reformed its climate and energy governance framework from “top-down” to “bottom-up”.
- The EU institutions are currently deciding on the Union's long-term climate strategy, which will guide EU climate action until 2050.

## What is the EU doing about Climate Change?

The EU's climate change strategy involves: the 2020 Climate & Energy Package, the 2030 Climate & Energy Framework, and the 2050 Long-Term Strategy.

### 1. The 2020 Climate & Energy Package

This package, enacted in 2009, sets targets for the EU in 2020 of:

- 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005 levels,
- 20% of EU energy coming from renewable sources, and
- 20% improvement in energy efficiency.

It sets binding targets for all Member States which together contribute to the overall EU target.

### 2. The 2030 Climate & Energy Framework and the Paris Agreement

The 2030 Climate & Energy Framework is based on the outcome of the 2015 Paris Agreement, to which the EU is a party. The agreement aims to ensure that global warming does not increase above 2°C and aspires to limit it to 1.5°C.<sup>1</sup> The agreement was

reached by 197 countries at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP21, in Paris in 2015.

To meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement, the EU has set itself 2030 targets of:

- 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels,
- 32% of EU energy coming from renewable sources, and
- 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The 2050 Long-Term Strategy

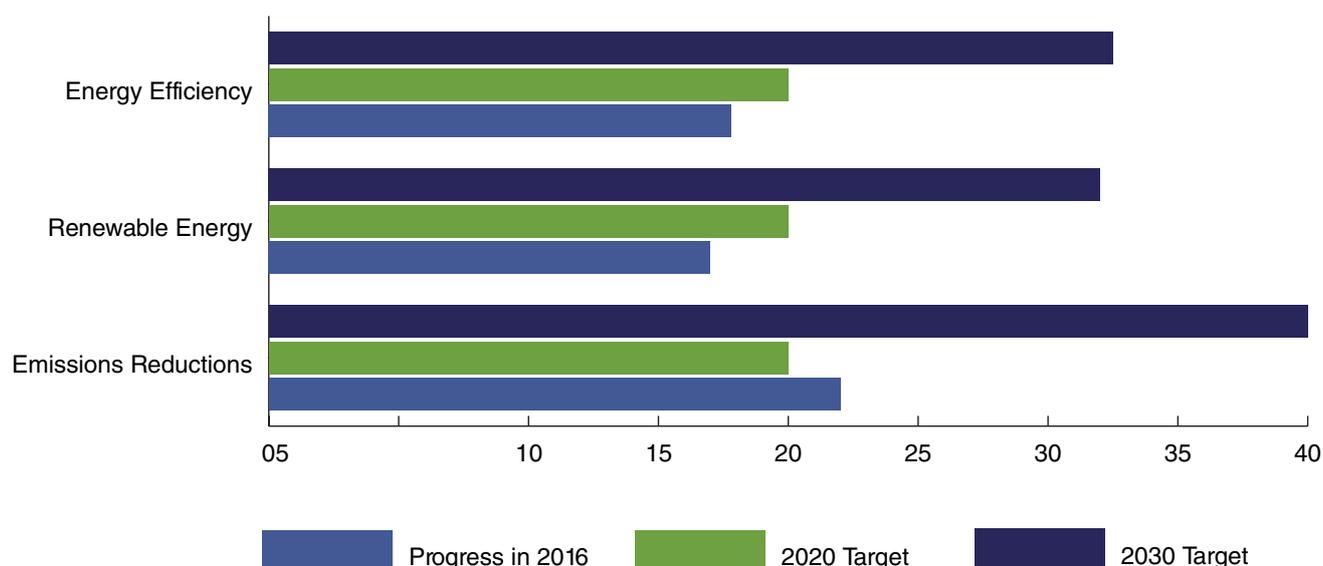
The EU is currently working on setting a Long-Term Climate Strategy to 2050 to guide further decarbonisation efforts. In November 2018, the European Commission published a Communication which sets out eight scenarios up to 2050.<sup>3</sup> However, only two of these scenarios offer the prospect of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, according to a March 2019 Resolution by the European Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

## How are the targets being met?

The 2020 Climate and Energy Package sets binding targets for all Member States which together contribute to the overall EU target. If Member States fail to meet their targets, they are required to buy carbon credits from other states who have exceeded their targets or to invest in projects that reduce emissions in other countries.<sup>5</sup> Failure to meet targets therefore carries a financial penalty for the Member State involved.

The 2030 Climate & Energy Framework takes a different approach. Member States were required to submit draft National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) to the Commission by the end of 2018. These plans set out each country's proposals for reducing emissions and increasing efficiency. The European Commission is currently in the process of assessing and modelling these submissions to see if they “add up” to the EU's overarching 2030 targets. In June 2019, the Commission will revert to Member States with recommendations on whether they should step up their proposed actions, and final NECPs must be submitted to the Commission by the end of 2019.

## Progress on 2020 and 2030 Targets



The European Commission will also carry out periodic “stock-takes” to assess Member States’ progress on their commitments. In 2023, there will also be an opportunity to revise overall EU targets upwards.

### What is good and bad about the new system?

This “bottom-up” approach to EU energy and climate governance for the 2030 targets, whereby Member States decide on how to act and the European Commission provides feedback and monitors progress, is a departure from the “top-down” approach taken by the EU in relation to its 2020 targets. This created binding Member State targets for renewable energy and emissions reductions.

This system allows Member States to tailor the way that they approach decarbonisation to account for national economic and demographic conditions.

However, the Commission has limited means of enforcement if national plans do not add up to EU-level targets or if Member States do not follow through on their commitments. This has given rise to concerns about the EU being unable to meet its Paris commitment, since it is not in a position to force Member States to act.

### Do the EU targets go far enough?

Some EU policymakers, particularly in the European Commission and the European Parliament, have argued that the EU’s Paris target is not ambitious enough. In March 2019, MEPs called for the overall emissions reductions target for 2030 to be increased to 55%.

However, any binding increase in emissions reductions targets would need to be endorsed by Heads of State and Government, some of whom have been reluctant to commit to more ambitious climate action.

*If you have a topic you would like us to address in this series please email [FutureofEurope@iiea.com](mailto:FutureofEurope@iiea.com)*

## Endnotes

1. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>
2. <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/clean-energy-all-europeans>
3. [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/pages/com\\_2018\\_733\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/pages/com_2018_733_en.pdf)
4. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190307IPR30745/climate-change-parliament-s-blueprint-for-long-term-co2-cuts>
5. [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/effort/framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/effort/framework_en)