

## New EU low-carbon economy proposals criticised for lacking ambition

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News

'Words won't fool melting glaciers', warn environmental campaigners.



**The European Commission has been accused of failing to live up to EU climate change promises and commitments | Photo credit: Press Association**

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Newly-announced EU efforts to tackle climate change across the EU “fall far short” of commitments made at international talks in Paris last year.

The attack comes after the European commission unveiled new proposals on Wednesday on how to distribute the goal of cutting emissions of least 40 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels among the EU's 28 member states.

The draft 'effort sharing' legislation sets out the emissions reductions now required by all member

states until 2030 in sectors not covered by the EU's emissions trading scheme.

On Wednesday, the commission also presented a "strategy" on low and zero-emission vehicles and alternative low-emissions fuels.

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A commission spokesman said the package "will steer Europe's low-carbon transition and respond to the commitments made by EU countries under the Paris Agreement on climate change."

But the proposals met with a decidedly lukewarm response in some quarters.

Dutch MEP Bas Eickhout, a member of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, said, "The Commission is failing to live up to the promises and commitments made by the EU on climate change.

"With the ink hardly dry on the UN climate agreement, the commission is acting as if the COP21 Paris climate summit never happened.

"The proposed national effort sharing targets for emissions reductions to 2030 are clearly below the level they need to be at if the EU is to play its part in meeting the goal of limiting the increase in global temperatures to well below 2°C and to try and limit the increase to below 1.5°C..

Eickhout, the Greens/EFA group's climate change policy spokesperson added, "If the EU is serious about addressing the problem, it urgently needs to increase the ambition of today's proposal."

"The commission's proposals include various loopholes, which will undermine the effectiveness of these rules in delivering actual emissions reductions."

Eickhout added, "Scandalously, EU member states could also use surplus allowances from the EU's emissions trading scheme (ETS) to offset emissions reductions in sectors outside the ETS, instead of actually reducing their emissions.

"Instead of abusing the surplus of permits that is undermining the ETS, the EU should simply cancel these permits and remove the 'hot air' from the malfunctioning system. Anything else would clearly not help tackle climate change."

Elsewhere, Friends of the Earth Europe was also critical, disputing the Commission's climate figures, arguing that signatories of the Paris Agreement committed to limiting temperature increases to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.

With the current plan, Europe is on track to a 2-2.4°C temperature increase, it warned.

Brook Riley, climate justice and energy campaigner for Friends of the Earth Europe said: “The EU’s climate plan promises far from Europe’s fair share in the fight against climate change – and everyone knows it. Words won’t fool melting glaciers, and only action can save those impacted by climate change. European and national policymakers need to stop presenting climate policy as a cost and start underlining its huge environmental and economic benefits.”

The Commission also courted controversy over its “lack of action” on tar sands and its continued support for gas in the transport sector, which environmental campaigners claim risks locking Europe into decades of fossil fuel use.

Colin Roche, extractives campaigner for the group, said: “Europe must end its addiction to fossil fuels, including in the transport sector. There is a gaping tar-sands shaped hole in this strategy – it does not stop the dirtiest fossil fuel on earth entering Europe’s fuel mix and threatening Europe’s transition to low-carbon transport.”

The group is calling on the commission to “do more, and to focus on the benefits of higher emissions reduction targets, and investment in renewables and energy efficiency.”

Further comment came from environmental campaign groups Carbon Market Watch and Transport & Environment whose EU policy director Femke de Jong said, “Worryingly, the proposal includes loopholes that put the real-world delivery of the EU’s climate pledge at serious risk.

“This is the first test since the signing of the Paris Agreement and the EU cannot afford it to let it fail. The 2030 target for the non-traded sectors is only 30 per cent which is not in line with the goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C.”

## About the author

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