

MEPs snub carmakers and back strong vehicle emissions reduction targets

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News

40 percent car and van emissions cuts will set the right incentives for manufacturers, says dossier's rapporteur Miriam Dalli.



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MEPs have controversially voted for a 40 per cent cut in car and van emissions by 2030.

The new vehicle emissions rules, navigated through the European parliament by Maltese Socialist MEP Miriam Dalli were approved in a vote in Strasbourg on Wednesday. MEPs also backed plans to accelerate the market uptake of electric and low- emission cars.

The 40 per cent target agreed by MEPs comes as a response to the lower figure of 30 per cent

originally proposed by the European commission.

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EU ministers will now adopt their common position on 9 October and negotiations with MEPs for a first reading agreement are due to start on 10 October.

Parliament's 40 per cent figure puts the assembly on a direct collision course with member states over the issue, with France thought to be undecided over which figure it will back, Germany is against any increase to the 30 percent cut in CO2 tailpipe emissions.

Transport is the only major sector in the EU where greenhouse gas emissions are still rising.

MEPs said that in order to meet the commitments made at COP21 in 2015, the de-carbonisation of the entire transport sector needs to accelerate, on the path towards zero-emission by mid-century.

The 40 per cent target – along with a 20 percent milestone agreed for 2025 – would still not meet the Paris agreement's objective of holding global warming to 1.5C.

“Achieving the European Parliament's support for a 40 percent CO2 emissions target by 2030 was no mean feat and I am proud of the successful result achieved” Miriam Dalli
MEP

Even so, the vote was welcomed by the Dutch Green MEP Bas Eickhout who said, “We cannot compromise our climate ambition because certain governments and the commission act as lobbyists for the car industry. In upcoming negotiations, the parliament must stand firmly by its newly agreed targets.”

The outcome of the vote was also welcomed by parliament's rapporteur on the dossier Miriam Dalli, who said: “Achieving the European Parliament's support for a 40 percent CO2 emissions target by 2030 was no mean feat and I am proud of the successful result achieved.

“Equally important is the 20 percent emissions target for 2025. This legislation goes beyond reducing harmful emissions and protecting the environment. It looks at setting the right incentives for manufacturers; it encourages investment in the infrastructure; it proposes a just transition for workers.”

Dalli added, “Now, I look forward to representing the Parliament and negotiating on its behalf for

strong legislation with the European Council and the European Commission".

Carmakers will have to ensure that zero- and low- emission vehicles - ZLEVs - have a 35 percent market share of sales of new cars and vans by 2030, and 20 percent by 2025.

"We cannot compromise our climate ambition because certain governments and the commission act as lobbyists for the car industry. In upcoming negotiations, the parliament must stand firmly by its newly agreed targets" Bas Eickhout MEP

The vote however angered many MEPs from the centre right EPP and ECR. groupings in the parliament.

Jens Gieseke, EPP group spokesman in the parliament's environment committee, warned that the 40 percent reduction target would have "serious consequences."

"This will not help the environment; it will, rather, destroy jobs and growth in Europe. It is crucial to do everything to protect the environment and stay ambitious, but we need to remain realistic."

Elsewhere, ECR group members branded the 40 per cent target as an "unrealistic and irresponsible plan to cut vehicle emissions," and warned that the decision will "endanger jobs and Europe's car industry.

Boleslaw Piecha, ECR environment spokesman, said that in opting to go "way beyond" the Commission's proposed 30 percent target the Parliament's "untested and un-costed position" would put car industry jobs and the competitiveness of the sector at risk.

"This will not help the environment; it will, rather, destroy jobs and growth in Europe. It is crucial to do everything to protect the environment and stay ambitious, but we need to remain realistic" Jens Gieseke MEP

Piecha said, "We were prepared to support an ambitious target to cut vehicle emissions, but not at the expense of jobs and the long-term competitiveness of the car industry. Ramping up the Commission's fully assessed 30 percent target to a higher 40 percent target that has not been robustly checked is irresponsible and unrealistic.

"Everyone wants to see more zero and lower emission vehicles on the streets, but we have a duty to protect industry and jobs which means that unachievable targets combined with punitive fines and penalties is not a workable way forward."

British Conservative MEP John Procter said: "We are concerned a 40 percent target, tied to punitive penalties, may be a step too far at this stage and further threaten jobs."

However, UK Liberal Democrat MEP Catherine Bearder rounded on her UK colleagues asking, "Do they seriously expect us to believe their government's promise of a green Brexit after this?"

Industry reaction was swift, with the European Automobile Manufacturers Association warning that the timetable for the changes might be hard to meet. Its secretary general, Erik Jonnaert, said: "We remain particularly concerned about the extremely aggressive CO2 reduction targets and the imposition of sales quotas for battery electric vehicles that MEPs have backed. The vote risks having a very negative impact on jobs across the automotive value chain."

However, a spokesman for Eurelectric, the Brussels-based body that represents Europe's electricity industry, said, "This decision is not fully in line with Europe's determination to fulfil its Paris commitments, but it is still significantly better than the original proposal put forward by the Commission.

Kristian Ruby, Eurelectric's secretary general, said, "Although we had hoped for more ambition, this vote is a signal that policymakers are seeking to move ahead and decarbonise transport and we urge Council to maintain this level of ambition. A further watering down is not an option".

About the author

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