

## MEPs to press Commission to declare “state of climate emergency” in Europe

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News

The demand, in the form a resolution to be voted on by deputies at their Strasbourg plenary, comes ahead of the COP25 climate conference in Madrid next month.



*Photo credit: Press Association*

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The resolution is backed by several mainstream groups, including the Greens, Renew Europe (RE) and the Socialists, the second biggest in the assembly.

Speaking at a news briefing in Parliament on Friday, a Socialist group spokesman said its leader, Spanish member Iratxe García Pérez, will call on the incoming new European Commission “to take concrete action on climate action.”

An RE spokesman, speaking at the same pre-plenary press conference, said, “We decided to put forward this resolution because we urgently need to declare a state of emergency in Europe.”

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"The time has come for us in Europe to act and, in adopting this resolution next week, send a clear signal that the EU's Green Deal is a project for our generation."

A Greens spokesman said it too backed the resolution, adding, "We also need to see some concrete action to back this up and avert climate crisis."

Each group was asked how their calls for a climate emergency squares with the fact that the Parliament itself continues to travel to Strasbourg 12 times a year.

A spokesman responded by pointing out that efforts had been made in the past to deal with the issue, so far to no avail.

"We decided to put forward this resolution because we urgently need to declare a state of emergency in Europe" **Renew Europe spokesman**

They also stressed that any alterations to Parliament's split site arrangement would require a change to the EU treaties.

One spokesman said, "The treaties give the right to Parliament to meet in Strasbourg."

It was also pointed out that a German MEP has proposed a possible solution to the problem of MEPs having to decamp to Strasbourg 12 times a year, as demanded by the EU treaties.

Nico Semsrott, from the satirical party Die Partei, in a letter to Parliament President David Sassoli, said, "My team of top legal minds has found a way forward. The treaty protocol that determines Parliament's place of business says simply that it must meet in Strasbourg, it does not specify whether that is Strasbourg, France, or Strasbourg, Saskatchewan — or whether Strasbourg is a city at all. That's why I have renamed the Brussels plenary hall 'Strasbourg' so we can instead meet there 12 time a year, fully in line with the treaties."

A study has been commissioned on the economic impact of trekking to Strasbourg 12 times a year.

A spokesman told reporters, "This study will, we believe, add more weight to the single seat campaign."

Elsewhere next week, MEPs will be asked to back calls to set up a special committee to probe cases of alleged interference in elections in Europe.

“We also need to see some concrete action to back this up and avert climate crisis”

**Greens spokesman**

An RE spokesman said, “We need to have this debate and see how we can, in the future, tackle the problem because it’s become a threat to our democratic process.”

Arguably the most important vote next week will be on the new college of commissioners.

MEPs will first have a debate with Ursula von der Leyen, the Commission President-elect and her new team, before the vote on Wednesday. A simple majority is needed for the team to be approved and start work.

A Parliament spokesman said, “This is a roll call vote so everyone will know who’s voted for who.”

The groups will first meet briefly to discuss their position before the vote and the Greens spokesman said they had still “some concerns” about the Hungarian nominee who has been ordered to answer more questions from MEPs after his nomination hearing.

The Socialists say the programme put forward by von der Leyen, which will be voted on next week, has “clearly been influenced by our group. It means that climate action and the Green Deal are now at the core of next possible future commission.”

“A lot of work was done to influence this and our nine (Socialist) commissioners now have key positions in the college. Frans Timmermans will also lead the fight for new Green Deal.”

The Socialists said the group will make its final decision on the new team headed by von der Leyen on Tuesday.

The political groups were also asked about the UK’s decision not to send a commissioner, despite infringement proceedings being started by the Commission.

A Parliament spokesman said, “It is clear from the advice from the legal services at the three EU institutions that the vote on the new college next week can still go ahead. It was the UK’s choice not to appoint anyone.”

An EPP spokesman said, “The UK may try to delay the start of a new Commission, but this cannot be allowed to happen.

“This is the UK’s problem, not ours.”

The Greens spokesman said, “We still want the UK to play a full role and submit a commissioner but we will leave this up to the EU’s legal services.”

MEPs will, in a busy week, also vote on the 2020 EU budget with the Parliament saying on Friday that it has now secured “more funding for its priorities including youth policies and R&D.”

They will also prepare for the December EU summit where climate change and the EU budget will take centre stage.

MEPs will also next week vote on a resolution combatting violence against women and girls with Parliament President David Sassoli planning to light the Parliament building in orange in a bid to raise awareness of the issue.

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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