

EU measures against climate change



Climate change will affect everyone. Photo by Ezra Comeau-Jeffrey on Unsplash

Fighting climate change is a priority for the European Parliament. Below you will find details of the solutions the EU and the Parliament are working on.

Mitigating global warming: a matter of 2°C increase

Average global temperatures have risen significantly since the industrial revolution and the last decade (2014–2023) was the [warmest decade on record](#).

Data from the [Copernicus Climate Change Service](#) shows that [2023 was the hottest year on record](#). The majority of evidence indicates that this is due to the rise of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) produced by human activity.

The average global temperature in 2023 was 1.48 °C higher than at the end of the 19th century. Scientists consider an increase of **2°C compared to pre-industrialised levels** as a threshold with dangerous and catastrophic consequences for climate and the environment.

This is why the international community agrees that global warming needs to stay well below a 2°C increase.

Why is EU climate action important?

Climate change is having an impact on Europe

Climate change is already affecting Europe in various forms, depending on the region. It can lead to biodiversity loss, forest fires, decreasing crop yields and higher temperatures. It can also affect people's health.

The EU is a big greenhouse gas emitter

The EU was the world's **fourth biggest greenhouse gases emitter** after China, the United States and India in 2023. The EU's share in the world's greenhouse gas emissions fell from 15.2% in 1990 to 6.0% in 2023.

Further information

[Discover more facts about climate change in Europe](#)

The EU is a committed member of United Nations climate negotiations

The EU is a key player in UN climate change talks and has signed the Paris agreement. All EU countries are also signatories, but they coordinate their positions and set common emission reduction goals at the EU level.

Under the **Paris agreement**, the EU committed in 2015 to cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. In 2021, the target was changed to at least 55% reduction by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050.

Further information

[Check out our timeline of climate change negotiations](#)

The EU has reduced emissions significantly

The EU aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% compared to 1990 by 2030 and to become climate neutral by 2050. Emissions have been consistently decreasing from 1990 to 2023. It is estimated that in 2023, EU emissions were 37% lower than in 1990, after a significant 8% drop compared to 2022.

Further information

[Check out our infographic on the EU's progress towards its climate goals](#)

The European Green Deal: achieving zero net emissions by 2050

In 2021, the EU made **climate neutrality**, the goal of **zero net emissions by 2050**, legally binding in the EU. It set an interim target of 55% emission reduction by 2030.

This goal of zero net emissions is enshrined in the climate law. The European Green deal is the roadmap for the EU to become climate-neutral by 2050.

The concrete legislation that should allow Europe to reach the Green Deal targets was laid down in [the Fit for 55 package that the EU adopted in 2023](#). It included the revision of legislation on emissions reduction and energy.

The EU is also working to achieve a circular economy by 2050, create a sustainable food system and protect biodiversity and pollinators.

In order to finance the Green Deal, the European Commission presented in January 2020 the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, which aims to attract at least €1 trillion of public and private investment over the next decade.

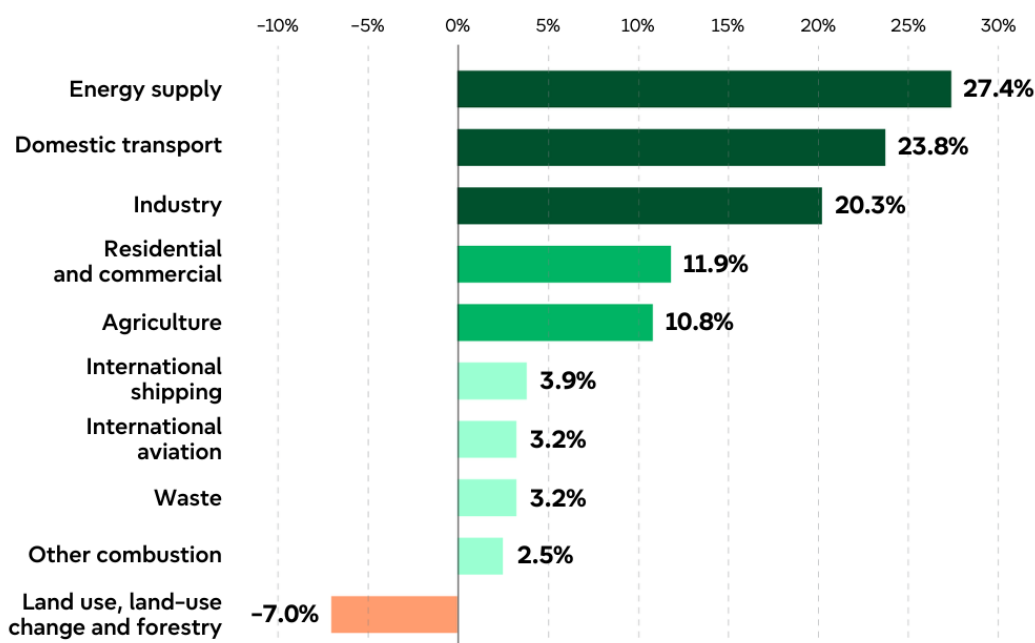
Under the investment plan, the Just Transition Fund is designed to support regions and communities that are most affected by a green transition, for instance regions that are heavily dependent on coal.

Further information

[Read more about the Green Deal](#)

Greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by sector

share of total emissions estimated in CO2 equivalent (2022)



Source: European Environment Agency



Infographic showing the share of greenhouse gas emissions by sector in the EU in 2022

Cutting greenhouse gas emissions with EU climate policies

The EU has put in place different types of mechanisms depending on the sector.

Power stations and industry

To cut emissions from power stations and industry, the EU has put into place the first major

carbon market. With the Emissions Trading System (ETS), companies have to buy permits to emit CO₂, so the less they pollute, the less they pay. This system covers 40% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions.

To align the Emissions Trading System with the more ambitious targets of the Green Deal, the scheme was updated to cut industry emissions 62% by 2030. The revised Emissions Trading System will include polluting sectors such as buildings and road transport as of 2027 and maritime transport.

Construction, agriculture and waste management

Sectors not yet included in the Emissions Trading System, such as construction, agriculture and waste management, will also reduce their emissions through effort-sharing between EU countries. To keep up with the ambitious Fit for 55 package, reduction targets for these sectors are set to increase from 29% to 40% by 2030.

Transport

Regarding **road transport**, in June 2022, the European Parliament backed a proposal to reach zero CO₂ emissions from new cars and vans in the EU by 2035.

In June 2022, Parliament voted in favour of a revision of the Emissions Trading System for **aviation**, including all flights departing from the European Economic Area in the scheme. In April 2023, Parliament adopted the revised proposal to phase out free allowances for aviation by 2026 and promote the use of sustainable aviation fuels.

Deforestation and land use

The EU also wants to use the **CO₂ absorption power of forests** to fight climate change. In the spring of 2023, MEPs voted in favour of an update of the rules governing deforestation and change of land use (LULUCF). The new rules will increase EU carbon sinks 15% by 2030.

Import from countries with lower climate ambitions

Parliament adopted rules for the carbon border adjustment mechanism in April 2023. This will

impose a carbon price on imports from carbon-intensive industries outside the EU to counter relocation to countries with less ambitious climate targets.

Further information

[Find out more details about EU measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#)

Boosting renewable energies and energy efficiency

Energy is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU. Improving energy efficiency and producing cleaner energy will help the EU to achieve its climate goals and reduce its dependency on imports.

In September 2023, Parliament backed a deal to [boost renewable energy](#). The **share of renewables** in the EU's final energy consumption should increase to 42.5% by 2030, while individual countries should aim for 45%.

In addition, the EU wants to [improve energy efficiency](#) with new targets, backed by Parliament in July 2023, of at least 11.7% reduction in energy consumption at EU level by 2030 (compared to 2020 projections of energy consumption in 2030).

Creating a sustainable and circular economy by 2050

The transition to a carbon-neutral EU by 2050 under the Green Deal means reconsidering the entire life cycle of products as well as promoting sustainable consumption and the circular economy. This should lead to a reduction in the consumption of resources, less waste and fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

The EU's Circular Economy Action Plan includes measures about:

- Packaging and plastics
- Sustainable textiles
- Electronics and ICT
- Construction and buildings
- Batteries and vehicles
- The food chain
- Critical raw materials
- Repairing and reusing goods

Further information

[Read more about what the EU is doing to achieve a circular economy](#)

Fighting climate change with biodiversity preservation and nature restoration

Restoring natural ecosystems and preserving biodiversity are important for climate change mitigation, increasing nature's carbon storage capacities and becoming more resilient to climate change.

Forests play an essential role in absorbing and offsetting carbon emissions, In April 2023 Parliament adopted rules to ensure goods imported into the EU have not contributed to deforestation or forest degradation anywhere in the world.

In February 2024, MEPs backed a new law, which binds all EU countries to work towards restoring natural habitats.

Further information

[Read more about how the EU preserves biodiversity](#)

[Read more about the EU's plan to restore nature](#)

Climate action and more

[European Commission page on climate action](#)

[Council page on climate change](#)

[European Environment Agency](#)

[Fact sheet on combatting climate change](#)