EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL RISK RADAR | UPDATE

What to watch out for in the EU's new legislative term 2024-2029



EUROPEAN CLIMATE LAW

Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality

The Climate Law writes into law the goal for Europe's economy and society to become climate neutral by 2050. It sets an intermediate target of reducing net domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, and ensures that all EU policies contribute to these goals.

WHAT'S IN IT?

OBJECTIVE

Climate ambition

In view of respecting the limit of 1.5°C global warming under the Paris Agreement

100% renewables

Accelerating the phase-out of fossils and nuclear

Fair participation

Of citizens in the benefits of the European Green Deal

Biodiversity

Preserving biodiversity in the EU and beyond

Zero pollution

Achieving zero pollution and a circular economy in the EU and beyond

GOOD PROSPECTS
IN VIEW OF
THE OBJECTIVE

MIXED PROSPECTS

A STEP BACKWARDS, UNDERMINING THE OBJECTIVE











WHAT'S NEXT?

STATUS

Entered into force

MILESTONES

Since June 2024

European Commission report on amendments and new legislative proposal delayed.

By September 2025

EU Council compromise for 2035 and 2040 climate targets.

By November 2025

UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 30 in Brazil, where countries will assess the adequacy of the 2035 targets.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR?

Speed. Slowing down the EU law's progress or implementation.

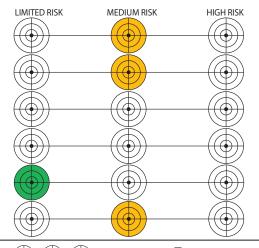
Money. Conflict on distributional effects or lack of finance for making this EU law impactful.

Fossil fuels. Open door to supporting the use of fossil fuels.

Nuclear power. Open door to supporting the use of nuclear power. for making this EU law impactful.

Licence for polluters. Undermining the polluter-pays principle, increasing global pollution.

Inequalities. Allowing for practices that deepen global inequality.



NO RISK



Learn more
eu.boell.org/green-deal-risk-radar

European Climate Law

WHAT'S IN IT?

Climate ambition

Confirms the EU targets to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Also establishes a process to ensure all relevant EU legislation and policies are consistent with, or contribute to, the fulfilment of the climate neutrality objective. While the above is ambitious, these targets are not considered to reflect the EU's fair share to limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C (see Climate Action Tracker).

100% renewables

In its preamble, calls for a transition to a safe, sustainable, affordable and secure energy system relying on the deployment of renewables, a well-functioning internal energy market, and the improvement of energy efficiency (with no references to nuclear or other false solutions).

Fair participation

Includes a full article (Article 9) on public participation calling on the European Commission to engage with all parts of society to enable and empower them to take action towards a just and socially fair transition. Unfortunately, the European Commission's instruments to do this are rather limited.

Biodiversity

Sets an ambitious target for increasing land-based carbon removals by 2030. Even while action to increase removals is not always serving biodiversity, there are, in general, strong overlaps.

Zero pollution

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and, in particular, the burning of fossil fuels will have substantial health co-benefits and achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions will contribute to achieving zero pollution.

WHAT'S NEXT?



STATUS

Entered into force on 29 July 2021

Transposition by EU Member States

Not directly applicable. The Regulation builds upon a range of other pieces of EU legislation that ensure the implementation of its key features. Furthermore, it clearly states that the 2050 climate neutrality target is an EU-wide collective target, not binding individual Member State to the same objective.

Revision clauses and reporting duties

Every five years, starting from September 2023, the European Commission (EC) shall assess the consistency of EU measures with the climate-neutrality objective as well as the collective progress made by all Member States through the annual Climate Action Progress Reports. Also, within six months of each United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) global stocktake (happening every five years from 2023 onwards), the EC shall submit a report, possibly including proposed amendments to the Regulation on its operation, in light of international developments in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and UNFCCC. As of 1 March 2025, this report has not been published, yet although the first global stocktake ended 13 December 2023.

Delegated acts and other related legislative action

The EC shall, within six months of the first global stocktake, make a legislative proposal to amend this Regulation to include the Union 2040 climate target. As of 1 May 2025, this has not happened, though the EC did issue a Communication in February 2024 proposing a 90% reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. It is assumed that the EC will only present a legislative proposal once the European Council has endorsed the 90% reduction by 2040 proposal.

European Climate Law

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR? RISKS













The key issue to look out for is the discussion and adoption of new EU climate targets for 2035 (in the form of a new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC) and 2040. Previously, all such targets were first adopted by the European Council. The Council may be pressured (similarly to, for example, the ratification of the Paris Agreement) to find a compromise at the latest before the hard UNFCCC deadline of COP30 in November 2025. This international process carries both risks and opportunities as the international pressure could push progressive governments to accept a weak compromise.

'We need a target for 2035 when we walk into [the UN COP 30 climate summit in] Belem. Whether we have that in February, I think, is unlikely."

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, press conference 15 January 2025

HOW TO IMPROVE IT? OPPORTUNITIES

The international NDC process and, in particular, the presentation of ambitious pledges by some of the G20 countries, such as the UK's target of reducing emissions by 81% by 2035 and Brazil's target to reduce emissions by 59% to 67%, may create the necessary conditions for the EU to adopt a highly ambitious target for 2035.

Furthermore, the EU is the only G7 country that has not yet submitted a 2035 climate target, and a new deadline has been set by the UN for all pledges to be submitted by September 2025 so that it can provide a synthesis of all pledges before COP30.

FURTHER READING

Wendel Trio/Heinrich Böll Stiftung: Getting back on track with new EU climate and energy targets for 2035 and 2040, February 2024