



# EU 2030 target plans

Paving the way to 2050 climate neutrality

May 2020



## Policy messages

1. The EU 2030 emission reduction target should be revised upwards to at least 55% by 2030, binding at member state level. In addition, the Commission should intensify collaboration with and support for those cities leading the way by aiming for an even higher reduction target for 2030.
2. An upwardly revised EU GHG reduction target by 2030 should be accompanied by a significant revision of the 2030 climate, energy and transport frameworks, such as the Renewable Energy Directive, the Energy Efficiency Directive, the ETS Directive and the forthcoming Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy.
3. Action at all levels of government and across all sectors is needed to achieve the goals of GHG emission reduction by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050. Cities are committed to showing the way forward. The Commission should capitalise on local expertise to develop the EU framework by increasingly working with city authorities and their European network organisations.
4. Reinforced financial support in the next multi annual financial framework from the EU to the local level will be essential to sustain the transformation process in cities and to meet more ambitious EU GHG reduction targets by 2030.

The unprecedented measures taken to combat the COVID19 pandemic have deeply disrupted the EU economy and have already brought enormous social and economic consequences. While efforts should remain focused on protecting the health of EU citizens and on tackling the immediate social and economic impact, we emphasise our continued support for EU's long-term objective of climate neutrality by 2050. The European Green Deal must remain at the core of EU's political ambition and measures to restart economic development, and an inclusive and just transition in Europe.

## EU 2030 emission reduction target

The current EU's 40% GHG reduction target for 2030 is not in line with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommendations, nor with the trajectory towards climate neutrality by 2050. According to the European Environmental Agency, faster decreases in GHG emissions are necessary to achieve the long-term decarbonisation objective of climate neutrality by 2050.<sup>1</sup> The 2019 UNEP emissions gap report stated that global emissions should fall

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<sup>1</sup> EEA Report No 16/2018

by 7.6% per year between 2020 and 2030 to keep the temperature rise to 1.5°C.<sup>2</sup> Every day we delay, the steeper and more difficult the cuts become. By just 2025 the reduction needed would be 15.5% per year, making the 1.5°C target almost impossible to reach by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

For the EU, achieving the Paris Agreement commitments by 2050 means reducing emissions far beyond the current target set for 2030. As cities, we are committed to the 1.5°C goal and understand the specific urban responsibility to lead the way. However, the framework at national and EU level must provide the right financial and legislative enabling conditions. We call for a reduction target of at least 55% for 2030, binding at member state level to ensure full commitment. We also call for the European Commission to strengthen direct collaboration with and support for leading cities that can show Europe the way to climate neutrality by aiming for an even higher reduction target of 65% by 2030.

There is no time for delay: the European Commission should keep the urgent impact assessment on the revision of the current 2030 targets on track for September 2020, as a vital next step on the new climate framework to ensure Europe follows the 2050 climate-neutrality trajectory.<sup>4</sup>

Setting a science-based Union carbon budget should also be an essential part of an EU strategy to contribute to the Paris Agreement and to identify the policy measures required to meet the budget. Integrated sectoral policies will be crucial. As will getting everyone on board to ensure a just and inclusive transition.

Finally, we urge the European Commission to apply the ordinary procedure to revise the emission reduction targets upwards every five years, ensuring full and direct involvement of member states and the European Parliament.

## EU 2030 sectoral objectives

To dramatically reverse the emissions trend, and significantly cut emissions in less than a decade, we need concerted action at all levels of government, ending fossil fuel use and indirect subsidies, significantly reducing the amount of energy used in buildings, transport and industry, producing more renewable energy, improving circularity, and developing urban carbon sinks.

An upwardly revised EU GHG reduction target by 2030 should be accompanied by a significant and coherent revision of the 2030 climate, energy and transport frameworks, such as the Renewable Energy Directive, the Energy Efficiency Directive, the ETS Directive and the forthcoming Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, in line with the overall ambition.

- Renewable energy

In the last 10 years, progress has been made in transforming Europe's electricity production. The global expansion of renewable energy led to massive cost decreases, in particular in solar and on- and off-shore wind energy production. The energy transition is already most visible at local level. The Covenant of Mayors' Action Plans are being implemented, and cities are introducing more and more renewable energy in their energy mix, developing local small-scale installations, fostering modern district heating and cooling systems and supporting citizens and local energy communities to produce their own renewable energy, alongside large-scale projects. According to the Commission's strategic long-term vision, by 2050 more than 80% of electricity will be coming from renewable energy sources.<sup>5</sup> The current EU renewable energy target of at least 32% of the EU's total energy final energy consumption by 2030 is not in line with the 2050 ambitions and should thus be revised together with the EU 2030 emission reduction target.

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<sup>2</sup> The policy scenario considers all of the policies now in place, but assumes that no additional measures are undertaken (reference year: 2005)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/emissions-gap-report/2019/>

<sup>4</sup> European Green Deal Communication, European Commission, 11 December 2019 (page 4)

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy (2018) <https://bit.ly/2M1fpia>

- Energy efficiency

The ‘Energy Efficiency first’ principle inherited from the previous Commission and reiterated in the European Green Deal and the Climate Law should remain at the top of the energy and climate architecture: the most sustainable energy is the one we don’t use. However, the assessment of the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) in 2019 showed that EU member states fell short on achieving their energy efficiency targets for 2020. The European Commission should step up efforts to ensure implementation and enforcement of existing energy efficiency legislation and, in parallel, put in place new legally binding measures to increase the energy efficiency ambition for 2030.

- Buildings

Buildings will need to be net-zero to achieve a climate-neutral Europe. Since most of the buildings that will be occupied in 2050 have already been built, the main challenge is to renovate these existing buildings to make them more efficient. The renovation rate should increase to at least 3% per year combined with an average energy demand reduction of 75% to reach 2050 climate neutrality - both targets being reached at the latest by 2030.<sup>6</sup> Without accelerating the renovation of the EU building stock, it will be impossible to achieve climate neutrality. The housing sector has a special responsibility to address social cohesion and emissions reductions, while creating local jobs and growth. Supporting measures and financing mechanisms for improving renovation rates should be put forward and the European Performance of Building Directive (EPBD) should be reviewed, alongside the EU 2030 emission reduction target, in line with the overall ambition of climate neutrality. In addition, EUROCITIES calls on the Commission to include building materials and construction into the 2030 climate action framework. The focus of the Circular Economy Action Plan on the construction sector is a step in the right direction and an EU targeted effort on zero-emission construction should be put forward.

- Carbon sinks

All scenarios that keep global temperature increase well below 2°C or even below 1.5°C include some emissions removal from the atmosphere.<sup>7</sup> If removing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the atmosphere remains a residual solution, it could help the offsetting of surplus emissions from sectors where decarbonisation is the most challenging, such as agriculture. Currently, the EU has no target on removing CO<sub>2</sub>. The EU should develop a coherent strategy to strengthen carbon sinks to address this gap. Afforestation and restoration of degraded forest lands and other ecosystems can further increase absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> while benefiting biodiversity, soils and water resources. Restoring green areas in cities and bringing nature to the built environment can also contribute to increasing local resilience if coupled with adaptation measures. That is why natural carbon sinks with nature-based solutions should remain the priority. But given the enormity of the task, the EU should also explore innovative solutions for technological carbon sequestration. Additional EU funds should be made available to finance carbon absorption demonstration projects in cities and identify potential regulatory barriers. That said, we want to reiterate that carbon removal can only be a viable solution if combined with drastic emission reductions.

- Transport

Achieving climate neutrality means a 90% reduction in transport emissions by 2050.<sup>8</sup> Such drastic emission reduction will not happen overnight. The Commission should implement measures to ensure the EU transport sector is compliant with 2050 net zero carbon emission pathways in its ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy’ and ensure that the milestones in the Strategy for 2030 are in line with the EU objectives. Improving local and regional public transit infrastructure will help achieve this goal, especially if there is a focus on last-mile passenger and freight

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<sup>6</sup> Quantitative analysis is based on the EU CTI model developed by the ClimateWorks Foundation and adapted by CLIMACT for the European Climate Foundation (ECF), <https://bit.ly/3eihsu1>

<sup>7</sup> A Clean Planet for all A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy COM/2018/773 final <https://bit.ly/3d3zK1T>

<sup>8</sup> Communication on the European Green Deal (2019)

transport. Emission standards should be compliant with the climate goals. Strengthening more active travel modes and cycling should also be part of the transport sector's contribution to the 2030 targets. Strong EU targets are necessary to create the right national framework conditions in support of sustainable urban mobility. As a result, adapting behaviour to these conditions can generate more demand for urban solutions such as reallocation of public space and infrastructure for active mobility. Cities can then implement these solutions together with citizens to significantly increase the effectiveness of actions. The alignment of measures at the local, national and EU level can leverage impact and achieve greater effectiveness than otherwise would be possible from city authorities alone. Finally, measures should also reshape transport between our cities, to ensure that a greater proportion of intra-EU flights are undertaken by international trains or other sustainable modes.<sup>9</sup>

## Cities leading the way

Achieving the goals of GHG emission reduction by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050 will be challenging for all. But in this fight to mitigate global warming and adapt to climate change, many European cities are showing the way: 64% of EUROCITIES members have already committed to becoming climate neutral by 2050.<sup>10</sup> Among them, twelve have even committed to become climate-neutral by 2040.

Cities are an integral part of the solution: the main challenges are in cities, but it is also where there is a wealth of expertise and experience that are hugely beneficial to developing plans and strategies, policies and regulations. The European Commission should capitalise on local insights by working with the European network organisations of cities as well as city authorities directly. As the facilitators for local stakeholders and citizens, their leading role and the tools they have to ensure a broad societal engagement in the transition towards a climate-neutral society are essential.<sup>11</sup>

Strong and innovative financial support from the EU to the local level will be essential to sustain the transformation process in cities and to meet more ambitious EU GHG reduction targets by 2030. The role of Horizon Europe will be instrumental in the transition, but additional funds and financial products that leverage sustainable private investments will be even more important. The EU mission for 100 climate neutral cities by 2030, including its governance tools and financing models, will show the way for many more local authorities.<sup>12</sup>

As cities, we are fully committed to working with the European Commission, and with all levels of government, to tackle the challenge of climate change in a socially and economically sustainable way, to drastically reduce GHG emissions by 2030, to reach climate neutrality by mid-century and to work towards a future where all people benefit from a healthy, resilient and safe environment.

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<sup>9</sup> EUROCITIES policy statement on the Path to Sustainable Urban Mobility (November 2019): <https://bit.ly/2X1ppOq>

<sup>10</sup> Cities leading the way on climate action, EUROCITIES publication, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3d6ArHO>

<sup>11</sup> EUROCITIES policy statement on the European Climate Pact (April 2020) <https://bit.ly/2Xz1yEU>

<sup>12</sup> <https://bit.ly/2TBtKWw>