

Press release

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Further design of EU climate target for 2030 decisive for climate protection

Public Relations & Communications Department

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Just in time for the fifth anniversary of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the European Council has decided to tighten the EU's climate targets. By 2030, the EU is to reduce its greenhouse gases by at least 55 percent compared to 1990 levels, with a view to becoming climate-neutral by 2050. Oeko-Institut welcomes this significant raising of the climate target for 2030 and emphasizes that the exact design of the target is crucial to the actual quantity of greenhouse gases to be reduced by 2030. Oeko-Institut has today published a policy paper on classification of the target.

"Raising the EU climate target from a 40 to a 55 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 is an important success for climate protection," says Sabine Gores, senior researcher at Oeko-Institut and author of the policy paper. "Now the quantity of emissions that may still be emitted in the EU by 2030 depends on further negotiations on defining the target and subsequently on the climate target architecture, i.e. the design of the policy instruments.

Details crucial for amount of emission reductions

The question of whether and how international navigation, international aviation and the land use sector will be included in the new EU climate target is central to determining the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions that are permissible up to 2030. If, for example, international navigation is included in the target or parts of international aviation are again excluded, this will have an impact of several percentage points on emissions in the other sectors.

The reason for this is that the above-mentioned sectors have recorded considerable emission increases since 1990; an emission reduction amounting to 55 percent is not expected by 2030. However, the fewer emissions that are reduced in some sectors, the higher the emission reductions that are necessary in other sectors.

Point of contention: the land use sector (LULUCF)

The role of the land use sector (land use, land-use change and forestry, LULUCF) is also currently being debated, both the European Commission and the European Council agreed to net GHG targets. With the use of natural areas such as forests, moors or green spaces, greenhouse gases are either emitted or can create so-called sinks by drawing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it. If the land use sector is incorporated in the EU climate target, having previously been excluded, other sectors could emit around 110 million tons more CO₂ equivalents in 2030, corresponding to approx. two percent of the EU's 1990 emissions.

There are two reasons for this: firstly, the quantity of emissions covered by the 55 % reduction is decreasing, as a result of which the absolute amount of necessary emission reductions is decreasing. Secondly, the sink will change only slightly by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. Its relative share of total emissions increases, meaning that other sectors will be allowed to emit more emissions.

"The inclusion of the land use sector in the climate target should not dilute the necessary emission reductions in other sectors," says Gores. "Separate targets and incentives for increasing the capacity of sinks would be appropriate."

EU contribution to Paris Agreement (NDC)

The design of the legal basis for the new EU climate target will be negotiated further in the dialogue between the EU Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the EU Commission. Oeko-Institut's researchers emphasize that once the climate target has been set, the appropriate design of the climate architecture, i.e. the policy instruments, is crucial. Annual budgets for all emissions should continue to be set and requirements for emission reductions in all sectors should be formulated.

The European council agreed that the new target will be submitted as the EU's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement by the end of the year. "An updated EU contribution to climate protection is a signal to other states to increase the speed and scope of climate protection and to further improve their own NDCs," Gores continued. "At the same time, it lays the foundations for a climate-neutral European economy, which must now set its sustainable and future-proof course."

[Oeko-Institut's policy paper "Wanted: A New 2030 Climate Target for the EU. An analysis of key choices for the ambition and scope of a 2030 target"](#)

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Oeko-Institut is a leading independent European research and consultancy institute working for a sustainable future. Founded in 1977, the institute develops principles and strategies for ways in which the vision of sustainable

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development can be realised globally, nationally and locally. It has offices in three cities in Germany: Freiburg, Darmstadt and Berlin.

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