



A European Climate Law

“I have been inspired by the passion, conviction and energy of the millions of our young people making their voice heard on our streets and in our hearts...I will propose...the first European Climate Law” – Ursula von der Leyen.

Forests are burning, glaciers are melting and the window for stopping catastrophic climate change is closing. To implement the Paris Agreement the new EU climate law should do the following:

1. **Declare a climate emergency**, and bring the full force of the EU’s powers to bear on tackling it.
2. Commit the EU to reaching economy-wide **climate neutrality (zero net emissions) by 2040**, and to going into negative net emissions thereafter.
3. Increase the EU’s 2030 emissions reduction target **from at least 40% to at least 65%**, with all sectors contributing, and require targets to be set for 2035 onwards in line with the science.
4. Set a target for **doubling carbon dioxide removal by EU sinks by 2030**, through legislation and funding for nature-based solutions that support biodiversity targets.
5. Commit to no backsliding and establish **a five year review mechanism**, in line with the Paris Agreement, to revise targets and update the EU’s long term strategy.
6. Require **all sectoral targets and legislation to be made consistent** with climate objectives, starting with the EU’s damaging bioenergy policies.
7. **End the era of fossil fuels**, by setting deadlines for their phase-out and banning any further exploration, subsidies and public finance and (as with tobacco) all advertising and sponsorship.
8. Task the European Commission with cutting **the EU’s international carbon and ecological footprint**, particularly by protecting and restoring the world’s forests.
9. Guarantee **a fair transition for all** and make climate justice a basic principle of EU policy.
10. Require changes to EU legislation so that the **EU budget and the operations of public and private financial institutions** are rapidly aligned with the 1.5°C goal, and exclude green investment from the calculation of national deficits.
11. Establish **an independent scientific body**, reporting to the European Parliament and Council, to advise on EU targets and scrutinise EU plans and policies.
12. **Involve EU citizens** in shaping climate policies through meaningful participative democracy (this should start with the EU climate law itself).

1. Declare a climate emergency

The new EU climate law should include in the preamble and in Article 1 ('subject matter and scope') a clear statement to the effect that the world is now facing a climate emergency and that all EU institutions need to act accordingly.

2. Climate neutrality by 2040

Given the EU's responsibility for historical emissions it should aim to reach zero net emissions economy-wide by 2040, not 2050, and move into negative net emissions thereafter.

3. A 65% cut in emissions by 2030

The EU's current 2030 target is not consistent with keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C or with any cost-effective trajectory to climate neutrality – whether in 2040 or 2050. It should be increased from 40% to 65%.

4. A doubling of sinks by 2030

In parallel to rapid emissions cuts, the EU should aim to double the current level of carbon dioxide removal by EU sinks by 2030, including through legislation that establishes a well-funded programme of nature-based solutions. This should be based on approaches such as ecosystem restoration that build climate resilience and help tackle the biodiversity crisis.

5. A five year review mechanism

To prevent backsliding and to take account of developments in climate science and technology, the EU's targets and long term strategy should be subject to a five-yearly review and ratcheting-up process, consistent with the Paris Agreement.

6. Making other EU legislation consistent

The climate law should require the Commission to propose legislation to bring all sectoral legislation – for example on emissions trading, climate action, land use, energy efficiency, renewable energy, agriculture, trade and transport – into line with climate objectives. This is particularly important where current rules actively undermine those objectives, as is the case with the EU's bioenergy policies under the Renewable Energy Directive and the Common Agricultural Policy.

7. End the era of fossil fuels

The biggest threat to the climate is the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. The EU climate law must put an end to this, by setting deadlines for their phase out, banning all subsidies and public finance (including for Projects of Common Interest) and – as has been done with the tobacco industry – prohibiting the use of advertising and sponsorship.

8. The EU's international carbon and ecological footprint

EU consumption leads to significant emissions and environmental degradation elsewhere in the world. The new EU climate law should task the European Commission with stepping up action to cut the EU's international carbon and ecological footprint dramatically, with a focus on new policy measures and legislation to protect and restore the world's forests.

9. A fair transition for all

The rapid transition to a climate neutral economy will only succeed with the full support and involvement of EU citizens, leaving nobody behind. The new law should make climate justice a basic principle of EU policy and facilitate the development of bespoke national and regional strategies designed with the participation of the communities themselves. It must also ensure that any EU structural or financial support is linked to such strategies and consistent with climate objectives.

10. Public and private finance

The climate law should provide for changes to EU legislation in order that the EU budget and the operations of public and private financial institutions are rapidly aligned with the 1.5°C goal in the Paris Agreement. It should also exclude investment in mitigation and adaptation from the calculation of national deficits.

11. An independent scientific body

Independent scrutiny and advice is essential if EU policies are to be based on the science. The climate law should establish an independent body, reporting to the European Parliament and Council, charged with advising on EU climate targets and scrutinising the EU's plans and policies for meeting them.

12. Involve EU citizens

Given the scale and pace of climate action required across society, standard online consultations on legislation are inadequate, and the EU should establish processes of deliberative or participative democracy (e.g. of the type exemplified by the Irish Citizens' Assembly on abortion). Whether part of the proposed 'climate pact', coordinated by the independent scientific body, or delivered in some other way, these processes must allow citizens to consider climate-related policies in the round, rather than case by case. And this approach should start with the EU climate law itself.

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