



NDC ANALYSIS

March 2021

EU: Short Way to Go

On December 18, 2020, the European Union submitted its updated NDC to the UNFCCC.

The EU NDC has enhanced its ambition, as targets have increased from "at least 40%" to "at least 55%" net reduction of emissions below 1990 levels. Changes in the treatment of the land sector weaken it, resulting in an emissions reduction of 52.8% below 1990 levels excluding LULUCF. The 2019 UNEP Emissions Gap Report implies that domestic EU GHG emissions reductions of at least 68% would be needed - and this is without taking into account equity-related issues such as population, wealth and responsibility for historical emissions.

The updated NDC is a political win, but not enough to respond to what science calls for. Our analysis takes into account the advance in mitigation ambition but also the high responsibility and capabilities of the EU, that signal that more could be done. Therefore, we conclude that the updated NDC has a Short Way to Go to become the NDC We Want.

Advances

Mitigation: EU heads of state and government have agreed to increase the GHG reductions target of "at least 40%" in emissions compared to 1990 levels to a reduction of "at least 55%" in net emissions. This means that for the first time the sink represented by the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector will be counted towards the target. Depending on the development of the LULUCF sink over the next decade, this means that emissions reductions in other sectors are likely to be no more than 52.8% and could be as low as 50.5%. The 2050 target was enhanced from an 80-95% emission reduction to achieving net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

Finance: The 2020 updated NDC mentions that legislative decisions and initiatives on climate action will be mainstreamed in policies and programmes financed under the EU budget (the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 (MFF), reinforced by a European Union recovery instrument named Next Generation EU (NGEU). An overall climate target of 30% will apply to the total amount of expenditure of these instruments and a Just Transition Mechanism, including a Just Transition Fund, will be created.

The updated NDC informs that, as part of the European Green Deal, a new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change will be presented by the European Commission in 2021/Q1. It also acknowledges the important role of Nature-based Solutions to solve global challenges such as biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation, poverty, hunger, health, water scarcity and drought, gender inequality, disaster risk reduction and climate change.

Gaps

Mitigation: the updated mitigation target is well below what the science suggests is needed to pursue the goal of keeping global temperature rise to 1.5°C, and is not therefore compatible with the Paris Agreement. The new target is newly defined as “net”, so this now includes emissions sinks in the land use and forestry (LULUCF) sector. Those are projected to be around 30 MtCO₂eq lower in 2030 than in 1990, which likely weakens this target by around 2%. The Climate Action Tracker claims domestic emissions reductions of between 58-70% is needed for the EU to be aligned with the Paris Agreement. The 2019 UNEP Emissions Gap Report implies that domestic EU emissions reductions of at least 68% would be needed - and this is without taking into account equity-related issues such as population, wealth and responsibility for historical emissions. Further, the European Parliament has called for an emissions reduction of 60% (excluding the LULUCF sink), and WWF and other civil society organisations are calling for a cut of 65%, arguing that this would be feasible with existing technologies.

Finance: Although it is mentioned that the EU will also provide further support to developing countries for emissions reductions abroad to ensure it is contributing its fair share of the global mitigation burden, no financial estimates or further details are provided.



For more information

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