

EU ISSUES UPDATE

March 2020



INFORMATION

European Commission proposes a Climate Law as part of the Green Deal

The European Commission has proposed a Climate Law designed to implement core objective of the Green Deal (See December 2019 EU Issues Update).

- It sets the EU target of reaching climate neutrality (net-zero emissions) by 2050 – i.e. any remaining greenhouse gas emissions will be balanced out by a mixture of “natural and technological means” (carbon capture etc).
- The headline goal is set at the EU level. The proposal refers to a “collective achievement of the climate-neutrality objective” - as with the current 2030 target for a 40% cut in EU-wide emissions compared to 1990 levels, there are no legally binding national targets.
- There is no concrete proposal for an enhanced mid-term target – while the planned new 2030 target is a 50-55%, more detail will only be provided later in the year and the Commission has initiated a public consultation on the matter.
- It requires policies related to emissions reduction to be revisited. The climate law would commit the Commission, by June 2021, to “review, and where necessary propose to revise, all relevant policy instruments to achieve the additional emission reductions for 2030” – including further measures to reduce vehicle emissions.
- The Commission is looking to tighten its powers of oversight – and by September 2023, and then every five years, the Commission will assess the consistency of EU and national measures with the climate-neutrality objective and the 2030-2050 trajectory.
- The commission would be able to make recommendations to laggard Member States and Member State Governments would be legally obliged to take due account of the recommendation.
- The law requires EU countries to boost resilience and adaptation to climate change.

There is no agreement at the Member State level on the medium-term CO₂ objective: northern Member States are keen for the target to be established now – southern and eastern Member States less so, with concerns about industrial competitiveness cited. At the same time, some environmental groups and some industry groups (including chemicals and bioenergy groups) are stating that the 2030 target should be set and should be at the more ambitious level.

Environmental campaigners call for stricter air pollution limits post Covid-19

Greenpeace Spain has published data showing that NO₂ levels in Barcelona and Madrid have fallen significantly since restrictions on movement were put in place on 15 March - the average NO₂ level across Madrid fell from over 60 µg/m³ on 10 March to 15 µg/m³ a week later. Likewise, data from Italy show a similar drop in pollution: the European Public Health Alliance has said that pollution levels in the Po Valley and Milan (one of the most populated areas of Italy) have also dropped. And European Environmental Agency data from urban monitoring stations shows NO₂ levels have fallen noticeably in Lisbon city center, on the A1 motorway in northern Paris and, to a lesser extent, in Berlin city center. However, monitoring stations in Brussels registered a rise in NO₂ immediately levels after restrictions had been imposed. The general trend has led the European Public Health Alliance to note that “While stopping most transport from one day to another is not a sustainable way to reduce pollution, we have to avoid going back to the same pre-crisis pollution level once the epidemic is over...The link between air pollution-caused diseases and coronavirus patient suffering and deaths is a strong reminder for all of us that health should prevail at any time and we have to significantly re-think our transport system.” Brussels based environmental group Transport & Environment have noted the same. While these drops in pollution are unsurprising given the marked reduction in transport and industrial activity, Environmental groups may well exploit these and future findings to push for more radical transport policy objectives.

Car-makers call for emissions reduction postponement re Covid-19

The European car industry has written to the European Commission calling for a postponement to the binding targets on fleet-wide CO₂ emissions in order to help manage the impact of Covid-19. The letter explained that “no production, development, testing or homologation work” is currently being undertaken...This upsets the plans we had made to prepare ourselves for complying with existing and future EU laws and regulations within the applicable deadlines set in these regulations.” The letter also made clear that the industry does not intend to question the laws nor the underlying objectives of road safety, climate change mitigation and protection of the environment. In parallel, environmental group Transport & Environment noted that falling car sales alone would not necessarily jeopardise the climate targets, which are based on a fleet-wide average for new cars as the key factor is the type of cars being sold, and it urged that the programme of emission reductions remain as established.

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The FIVA Legislation Commission members are: Lars Genild (Chairman), Giuseppe Dell'Aversano, Wolfgang Eckel, Carla Fiocchi, Laurent Heriou, Johann König, Stanislav Minářík, Bob Owen, Christos Petridis, Kurt Sjoberg and Andrew Turner of EPPA works with the Committee.