

Crunch time for MEPs on climate and energy

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On Wednesday MEPs can confirm that they, at least, take the Paris Agreement seriously

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On 17 January, the European Parliament votes in plenary on three key pieces of EU climate and energy legislation for 2021 onwards. It will decide its position on the European Commission's proposals on renewables; energy efficiency; and governance - that is, the rules on energy and climate change planning and reporting.

Imke Lübbeke, Head of Climate and Energy at WWF European Policy Office said:

"It's crunch time for MEPs. They have been fairly progressive on climate and energy issues so far - a vital counterweight to the dismal EU Council. On Wednesday MEPs can confirm that they, at least, take the Paris Agreement seriously by voting for ambitious renewables and efficiency targets for 2030, a net zero emissions target for 2050 and an end to the scandal of burning trees to tackle climate change."

Energy efficiency

MEPs in plenary must confirm the forward-looking position voted in the energy committee in November. This includes a 40% binding overall target for 2030, with binding national targets, as well as strong rules on annual energy savings.

Renewables and bioenergy

MEPs in plenary must support a 45% renewables target with national binding targets and no loopholes. They must also tighten bioenergy sustainability criteria to exclude whole trees - and food crops - from renewable energy incentives, to avoid **disastrous consequences** for the global climate and forests.

Energy Union governance

MEPs in plenary must confirm the forward-looking position voted in the energy and environment committees in December. This includes a target of the EU being carbon neutral by 2050 at the latest (i.e. zero net greenhouse gas emissions) and a requirement that Member States develop their 2030 plans alongside their long-term strategies, ensuring they are consistent.

More information:

What are the points to watch out for during the European Parliament vote?

Energy efficiency

Negotiations to table joint amendments for plenary between the two biggest European Parliament groups - S&D and EPP - collapsed last week. This means there is a big question mark over the vote on the energy efficiency directive.

The options on the table for the plenary vote include (amendments can be found [here](#)):

On the 2030 energy efficiency target:

- 40% binding EU energy efficiency target with national binding targets (ITRE text)

- An at least 35% EU binding target with national energy efficiency target, without specifying whether these are binding or indicative (tabled by ALDE and Greens)
- A 35% EU binding target with an adjustment mechanism that allow to modify the target to take into account industrial value added and with indicative national targets, which can also be adjusted (tabled by EPP).
- A 30% indicative target with national indicative targets (tabled by ECR).

On the annual energy savings obligations (Article 7):

- Strong Art. 7 with transport energy included in the baseline to calculate the 1,5% and with actions to improve primary energy savings as the only ones allowed to fill the 25% exemptions (ITRE text)
- Weak Art. 7 in which transport energy use is only partially included and exemptions (are increased from 25% to 30% (tabled by EPP).

Renewables and bioenergy.

In November, MEPs on the energy committee supported a 35% EU target for 2030. They did not support binding national targets and gave Member States 10% 'flexibility' - meaning there's a risk that it could end up being only 31.5%. If the Paris Agreement is going to mean anything they should be voting for at least 45% renewables, together with binding national targets.

But even 45% won't mean much if MEPs don't close the massive, dangerous loopholes on bioenergy. **Scientists agree** that using whole tree trunks and stumps for energy (as opposed to wastes and residues) will typically increase emissions for decades or even centuries, but nothing in the current proposals will stop it happening. MEPs have to exclude those things from incentives - together with biofuels made from food crops - and put the focus of the Directive where it belongs: on wind and solar.

The other hot topic is the level of a new transport target: MEPs in the energy committee voted for a new 12% renewable target in the transport sector. While in theory this is a good idea, with no meaningful rules on biofuels the targets are likely to be met by unsustainable and polluting biomass rather than sustainable wind and solar.

Of the **amendments** that have been tabled by political groups and that will be voted on in plenary the ones to watch out for are:

- A 45% renewable energy target with national binding targets (tabled by EFDD)
- The proposal to cap certain food and feed-based biofuels by Member State at the level of production achieved in 2017 (S&D, ALDE, EPP)
- The exclusion of stumps and roundwood (S&D, Greens) or the exclusion of stumps and stemwood (EFDD)
- A requirement that biomass only be burned in highly efficient plant that do not use fossil fuels, i.e. no co-firing (S&D, Greens)

Energy Union governance

Earlier votes on governance were very encouraging - if close. MEPs on the Parliament's energy and environment committees voted in December in favour of a net zero EU greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050 at the latest. They also called for both the EU and Member States to develop climate plans for 2050 by 1 January 2019 rather than 2020, and to make sure their shorter-term 2030 plans were consistent with those long term strategies.

MEPs should resist any attempts to water down those provisions - for example by deleting the 2050 target or postponing the date by which the long term strategies need to be published.

Key **amendments** to watch out for include:

- New compromise amendments (supported by Greens, S&D, ALDE, EPP - and hence certain to be adopted) on the trajectory for renewable energy deployment between 2020 and 2030 (not linear, but a bit stricter than the Council's position).
- Detailed criteria (e.g. on GDP) to be taken into account when assessing if Member States' contribution to the 2030 renewables target are sufficient (S&D)
- An amendment (tabled by EPP) to postpone the date for delivery of long term strategies to 1 January 2020, reversing the vote in committee that very sensibly brought this forward to 1 January 2019, to facilitate consistency between the shorter term plans and the long term strategies
- Amendments (also EPP) to remove the EU 2050 'net zero' GHG target and the template for long term strategies adopted in the Committee stage

What is the position of the EU Council on these files?

Energy efficiency

In June, Member States had agreed on a low, 30% energy savings targets for 2030, without clearly indicating whether this will be binding or indicative. They also undermined the rule that states countries should save 1.5% energy per year by decreasing this objective to 1% between 2026 and 2030 and by adding additional loopholes.

Renewables and bioenergy

In December, Member States agreed on a 27% renewables target – less than business as usual, and rules on bioenergy that are largely meaningless and that leading scientists say pose **a serious threat** to forests and climate. It's now make or break in the Parliament - the last chance to stop the madness.

Energy Union governance

The Member States' position, also reached in December, was disappointing: They agreed a trajectory for renewable energy deployment that would postpone increased capacity to the second half of the 2020s and did not support a long-term climate goal.

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NGO briefing paper - Energy Efficiency Directive review
PDF 342 KB

A Climate for the Future: Assessing EU Member States' 2050 low carbon strategies - update
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- [More on WWF's work on climate and energy](#)
- [Letter from 750+ scientists to the EU Parliament on bioenergy](#)
- [WWF press release: EU bioenergy proposals “threat to climate and sustainable development” - NGOs](#)