

Austria's climate balance in 2024 is worse than expected

The Federal Environment Agency has revised its estimate of the decline in emissions last year downwards. The long-term trend remains the same - the role played by environmental policy is controversial.



Since 2005, emissions in Austria have fallen by a good quarter. APA/AFP

Austria's greenhouse gas emissions are falling. But they are not falling nearly as fast as the experts from the Federal Environment Agency predicted just a few weeks ago. On Friday, the Federal Environment Agency presented an updated estimate of greenhouse gas emissions. According to this, emissions will only fall by 1.9 million tons of CO2 equivalents, or 2.7 percent, in 2024, ⁱⁿ an estimate presented at the end of January (and prepared in November), the agency still expected a **decrease of 3.7 percent**.

Nevertheless, 2024 remains the third year in a row in which the country was able to significantly reduce its emissions. There were notable improvements, especially in the areas of buildings (minus eleven percent) and transport (minus four percent). Since 2005, Austrian greenhouse gas emissions have thus fallen by a good quarter. But what share of this is due to climate policy?

Politics saves every fourth ton of CO₂

"We see that it pays to implement measures," emphasizes Günther Lichtblau, climate expert at the Federal Environment Agency. "This remains necessary in order to achieve the climate goals and climate neutrality." The two WU researchers Talis Tebecis and Jesús Crespo Cuaresma do not doubt this. But in a recent study they see other main drivers for the decline in emissions in the country.

For their study, the economists compared the greenhouse gas emissions of the OECD countries with their respective gross domestic product and population development. "If you take these two main influencing factors out of the equation, you are left with fluctuations that are most likely due to climate policy," says Tebecis. For Austria, the researchers found only 62 of these statistical outliers over the entire period under review. In Germany there were around 131, in Ireland 261. The data leads the researchers to conclude that only a good quarter of the emission reduction since 2005 can be attributed to political climate protection measures.

February 28, 2025 at 10:39Matthias Auer  consequences