

HARDLY A ROLE MODEL

## Domestic climate policy: a drop in the ocean



Although outgoing Environment Minister Leonore Gewessler's initiatives have brought climate policy a few small steps forward, the data does not show any great leaps forward. (Bild: Krone KREATIV/SEPA Media/Martin Juen, Weingartner-Foto/picturedesk.com)

**The effect of domestic climate policy has so far been more of a drop in the ocean. Especially in international comparison, Austria does not play a pioneering role. However, a new study by the Vienna University of Economics and Business provides promising starting points for how things could improve in the future.**

Researchers at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) have presented a sobering assessment: If you add up all the climate measures set by Austria's politicians, they only resulted in a maximum reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 2.5 percent compared to 2005 levels.

This is the conclusion reached by scientists Talis Tebecis and Jesús Crespo Cuaresma using a newly developed calculation method, which was presented in the journal "Scientific Data".



The tailwind from the Fridays for Future climate movement could not necessarily be used. (Bild: Mathis Fotografie)

### After all: emissions have fallen significantly

Greenhouse gas emissions in Austria peaked in 2005 at 79 million tons. Since then, they have fallen by around 26 percent or 20 million tons by 2023. In their analysis, the researchers focused on CO2 emissions from fossil fuels, which account for the majority of total greenhouse gas emissions.

### Little remains at the end

Using their new statistical method, the scientists filtered out those factors that have nothing to do with active climate policy - such as economic development, population growth, technological progress or the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. What remained were "statistical outliers" that can be attributed to climate policy measures.

### Austria is anything but a pioneer

Austria performs poorly in a European comparison. The researchers identified only 62 statistical events between 1995 and 2021 that can be attributed to political measures. "There were 131 in Germany and as many as 261 in Ireland," emphasizes Tebecis. According to the study, countries such as Israel, the USA, Hungary and Poland were similarly inactive to Austria.

The goal of reducing domestic emissions by 48 percent by 2030 compared to 20 years ago seems a long way off. According to the researchers, even if Austria were to implement all the planned measures, it would only achieve a reduction of around 35 percent.

### Researchers call for big leaps

The greatest savings were achieved in the emission-intensive metal industry as well as in refineries, biomass and waste incineration plants and in the electronics industry. In contrast, hardly any progress was made in electricity and heat generation, wastewater treatment or manure management.

The scientists recommend taking more targeted measures in future, tailored to different sectors of the economy. The focus should be on the largest emitters: the transport and transit sector, the energy industry, the production and construction sector and the residential sector. In addition, care must be taken to ensure that nationwide regulatory measures are not watered down by state regulations.

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