

Press Release

What do we have in the European luggage for the COP in Glasgow?

Brussels, 26 October 2021

According to the Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report announced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in August this year, it is unequivocal that human influence has induced global warming.

The Assessment Report outlines that the influence caused by climate change has been drastically and is increasingly serious, following that the remaining amount of CO₂ that is allowed to be emitted to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 °C is only 400 billion tonnes.

The EU regards itself as a world leader in fighting climate change. However, what does the European Union have in their travel bag to the COP in Glasgow? Are there path-making and ground-breaking achievements to show?

Not much in the EU's travel bag - except plans and expectations

The announcement of the EU Green Deal as project to decarbonise Europe and to put it on a sustainable path was a clear and unique commitment to the world, followed by the legislative climate reform project "Fit for 55".

Yet, the first optimistic atmosphere of departure to put renewable energy and energy efficiency in the centre of a new European energy system by proposing a courageous and difference-making legal framework and policy setup is fading. Business as usual has gained its upper hand again. Despite rising energy prices, nuclear and fossil interests again gain momentum ignoring that they are much more expensive than renewables.

The draft legislative package issued by the European Commission in July 2021 still lacks ambition and binding targets for 2030 for renewables and for all EU Member States.

If all works fine, the co-decision process on this package will be finalised in summer 2022.

In case of the Directives, notably the Renewable Energy Directive Recast (REDIII), governments still need to transpose them into national law. Unfortunately, most Member States do not transpose in time. The current Renewable Directive 2018/2001/EU (RED II) entered into force in December 2018 and established an unambitious 2030 target for renewables of at least 32%, albeit with a provision for a possible upwards revision by the Commission by 2023. RED II had normally to be transposed into national law by Member States by 30 June 2021. Even bigger Member States such as Germany only transposed with months of delay.

Article 5 of the current RED III proposal now foresees that Member States will need to transpose the Directive and to bring into force laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary “by 31 December 2024 at the latest”. That implies that a real and accountable uptake for 2030 will only take place in the last 3-4 years of this decade.

This is quite absurd. The Commission should use its power under the current RED II and demand from Member States to submit as fast-track an accelerated implementation plan by mid-2022, especially when it comes to existing obstacles of barriers in planning and permitting.

A further serious stumble block are the lengthy procedures for green light for national support programmes for renewables, which can easily take up to a year or longer due to the negotiations between DG Competition and Member States.

EREF agrees that some of these delays might be caused by a certain ping-pong play of national administrations which are not really committed and the Commission serves as scapegoat. Nonetheless, DG Competition needs to develop a positive fast-track routine as well.

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