

THINK 2030

Science-policy
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Led by



DRAFT: THINK 2050, ACT 2020

Bringing European ambition and policies in line with the Paris Agreement

Key messages

The EU needs to address the discrepancy between its current ambition and its commitment under the Paris Agreement, based on a new vision for 2050. It needs to take this review as an opportunity to think strategically about where its implementation gaps are, taking a sectoral real-economy approach to triggering transformation to net zero emissions. In order to better foster engagement across scales, the EU needs to put in place an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders and instill a 'race to the top' dynamic, supported by incentives and better enabling conditions.

Background

Tackling climate change demands a fundamental transformation of societies and economies in the coming decades, which needs to be triggered by today's policies. In 2019 and 2020, EU policy makers have a window of opportunity to take important decisions in this regard. Climate action requires both a long-term vision and consistent policies and actions over time to turn the vision into a reality. Long-term vision and short-term actions are mutually supportive if consistent: deep decarbonization can be triggered by choices made today and long-term thinking may not only reveal optimal near-term actions but also inform and galvanize stakeholder support. For the first time, the EU is making a direct connection between short-term climate action and long-term ambition, as requested in the Paris Agreement. But, not only is the EU's current climate ambition to 2050 and to 2030 not aligned with its commitment to the Paris Agreement, it is not yet on track to meeting its existing 2030 targets.

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Policy recommendations

To ensure broad transformational change, EU institutions must both revise upward its long-term ambition and ensure its 2030 policies align with it.

SUBSTANCE: “Paris-compatible” pathway towards 2050

- Develop a comprehensive mid-century strategy to achieve net zero GHG emissions at least by 2050 and negative emissions thereafter, in line with the Paris Agreement, mindful of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Revise the EU NDC for 2020 to reflect this long-term ambition.
- Define a mechanism for developing the EU’s NDC by 2025, informed by a long-term vision and linked to the revision process of Member States’ National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs).

PROCESS: Build ownership for the 2050 strategy

- Create an inclusive process for strategy formulation through strong national-level engagement and broad stakeholder engagement, which should become a permanent dialogue on the transition.
- Make the 2050 strategy a key part of the Future of the EU discussion, and link it with parallel processes such as the Sibiu Summit in 2019.
- Support regional, cross-border and local climate action through EU policy instruments, including for dedicated support for a just transition.

POLICIES: Create transformative measures to implement the 2050 vision

- Design integrated, mission-oriented sectoral industrial policy strategies with specific objectives, supported by policies aimed at triggering transformation drivers in each sector (and across them).
- Design an overarching EU-level coordination mechanism to support greater national action and to implement these strategies, including through targeted common EU policies.
- Align infrastructure (primarily European energy and mobility networks) policies and related investment funds with the long-term vision.
- Design a regulatory framework for the enhancement of natural sinks and for negative emission technologies.

CONDITIONS: Create European-level enablers

- Strengthen the link between the MFF and the 2050 agenda by increasing the climate mainstreaming target and creating financial incentives in MFF conditions and programming for enhanced national ambition.
- Increasing green public procurement, beyond transport and energy efficiency to include low carbon construction materials.
- Include in the innovation strategy the potential role of product substitution and business model innovation, beyond technological advances.

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