

One year after launching a Green Deal that led the way for other major economies to raise their climate ambitions European Union leaders have agreed to more aggressive cuts in greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade. The decision to cut pollution by at least 55 % by 2030, up from 40 % previously, was expected. But it helps keep global momentum on the issue going into 2021, when incoming US President Joe Biden plans to re-join the landmark Paris Agreement and set a 2050 net-zero goal.

The EU decision was reached at a summit in Brussels, which started on Thursday, 10 December. Three fossil-fuel reliant countries opposed an initial deal, asking for more help to clean up their economies. Hungary and the Czech Republic dropped their objections during the night but Poland continued to block the deal until Friday morning. It eventually agreed to the new target after getting assurances that the financial burden will not fall disproportionately on its shoulders. The new target will require an additional 350 billion euros a year in energy production and infrastructure investment.

The EU is the world's third-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, right behind China and the United States. Carbon dioxide emissions from Europe have been going down in recent years, largely driven by a reduction in the use of coal, which fell 18 % in 2019.