

Air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions: monitoring mechanism and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol

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This Report has been prepared by the Commission in accordance with provisions spelt out in Decision 280/2004 on a mechanism for monitoring Community greenhouse gas emissions and the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. It focuses on the level of Community progress to date and is based on information submitted by the Member States in June 2005.

The Kyoto Protocol acts as an international agreement and sets legally binding targets for industrialised countries to reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions relative to a base year by 2008-2012. The first five years are known as the first commitment period. The Protocol has a flexible approach vis-à-vis implementation, leaving the Member States to decide how best to achieve the targets set. For example, some Countries may wish to increase “sinks” (forests, which remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) or pay for foreign projects that result in greenhouse-gas cuts.

As far as EU obligations are concerned, the EU committed itself to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 8% compared to the base year, 1990, during its first commitment period (2008-2012). Of the ten new Member States (who acceded following ratification of the Kyoto Protocol), eight have individual reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol of 6 or 8%, which they will need to honour separately from the collective EU-15. Cyprus and Malta are not parties and thus do not have set targets under the Protocol.

In terms of overall progress, the Commission reports that the EU is making considerable efforts to tackle climate change, despite being responsible for only 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Each Member State has put in place a series of domestic actions. Many of the actions are introduced and enacted through the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP). Measures under this scheme include, *inter alia*, the Greenhouse Gas Emission Allowance Trading Scheme, allowing operators to use credits obtained through Kyoto mechanisms (the Linking Directive), the Renewable Energy Directive and the Bio-fuels Directive. In addition, the Commission points to initiatives such as the second phase of the European Climate Change Programme, which has been prepared for the second phase of the Kyoto implementation, post 2012. Planned projects include carbon capture and storage, reducing emissions from road vehicles and strategies to adapt to the effects of climate change.

As well as overseeing implementation of the Kyoto targets, the Commission is committed to working internationally in helping countries outside of the Union to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. For example, it is currently working with 140 countries in six regions of the world to assist in the implementation of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. The EU provides financial support to programmes such as using solar energy to provide clean drinking water in the Sahel, improved energy efficiency and the use of renewable in China, forest-planting projects to generate clean development mechanisms in South America and strengthening institutional capacity on climate change in India.

The Report also considers the impact of transport on greenhouse gas emissions. It notes that this sector is responsible for 20% of the EU-25 emissions – and is an area where emissions are rising. Although the EU has tried to reduce emissions through measures such as an agreement to limit the average emissions of new cars and a directive to encourage the use of bio fuels, the growth in the number of vehicles and vehicle kilometres has outweighed these reductions. As a result, emissions continue to rise – albeit at a lower rate than in the past year.

As are as concrete figures are concerned, the Report notes the following:

- EU policies have contributed to a reduction of annual carbon dioxide emissions of some 350 million tonnes (5.5%) across the EU-25 by 2003.
- In the EU-15, projected figures indicate that by 2010 greenhouse emissions are expected to be 1.6% below base year levels.
- Savings from domestic policies and measures being planned by the EU-15 could result in emission reductions of 6.8%.
- The inclusion of Kyoto mechanisms will lower projected emissions in 2010 to 9.3% below base year levels.
- In the EU-25, based on aggregate projections, total emissions of greenhouse gases without LULUCF will be 5% below base year levels in 2010 as a result of measures already implemented.
- The implementation of additional measures is projected to reduce EU-25 emissions to 9.3% below 1990 levels by 2010 and the use of Kyoto mechanisms to 11.3%.

To conclude, the Commission states that the EU has made significant progress in achieving its commitments. Further progress depends on the speed and thoroughness of Member State implementation programmes. The Report suggests that if measures are properly implemented the -8% Kyoto target can be met. However, delivering on the Kyoto commitments does not mark the end of the EU's efforts. As such, the EU is advocating deeper cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in a bid to halt climate warming all together.