

E-news update June 26 2006

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EU

- 1.1. Transport review lowers EU's green ambitions

23 June 2006, ENDS Europe DAILY 2123

The European commission has proposed future orientations for EU transport policy in a mid-term review of the 2001 transport white paper published on Thursday.

The review sets a timetable for achieving actions foreseen in 2001 that have not yet been taken forward. It also proposes additional measures such as intelligent transport systems to make mobility more environmentally-friendly, a green propulsion programme and an urban transport green paper.

However, the commission has dropped a key 2001 objective of decoupling transport demand from economic growth (EED 12/09/01 <http://www.endseuropedaily.com/10581>). Instead, it now says that mobility must be "disconnected from its negative side effects".

Green group T&E complained that the change contradicts the relaunched EU sustainable development strategy adopted by EU leaders earlier this month, which reaffirms the decoupling objective (EED 14/06/06 <http://www.endseuropedaily.com/21161>).

A commission official told ENDS that a more "pragmatic approach" was required. The review argues that the general context has changed.

Increased globalisation has led to the creation of large logistics firms, which means that the EU will have to "focus much more on strengthening the competitiveness of its multimodal transport industries", it says.

This adds to the fact that transport commissioner Jacques Barrot made it clear that boosting mobility, seen as key to delivering economic growth, is the main priority (EED 16/06/06 <http://www.endseuropedaily.com/21185>).

The commission also downgrades another of the white paper's key targets: shifting transport from roads to "greener" modes. An impact assessment accompanying the review concludes that returning the share of rail traffic to 1998 levels cannot be met. Continuing to focus on modal shift as a prime objective would have a negative impact on mobility and growth, it goes on.

At a press conference on Thursday, Mr Barrot denied accusations that the commission had abandoned its modal shift objective altogether.

"We will continue to work with the modal shift approach, particularly on long distance transport", he said.

The EU's "Eurovignette" rules on charging goods vehicles would be improved to take greater account of environmental costs, the commissioner continued. "We are also going to make sure that rail takes a greater share of the market, but that does not mean that we are going to reduce traffic from other modes", he added.

Follow-up: European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm, tel: +32 2 299 1111, press release <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/818> and review http://ec.europa.eu/transport/transport_policy_review/index_en.htm. See also reactions from green group T&E.

1.2. EU and USA agree climate change dialogue

21 June 2006, ENDS Europe DAILY 2121

The annual EU-US summit in Vienna on Wednesday saw the launch of a high-level dialogue on climate change, clean energy and sustainable development, which will see both parties "act with resolve and urgency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions". Discussion will include the use of market-based mechanisms to achieve cuts.

"The dialogue will cover the role of a global carbon market, flexible mechanisms to deliver cost-effective emission cuts, efficiency and conservation, renewable fuels, clean diesel, the capture of methane, lower emitting agricultural operations, and energy production and distribution systems, as well as issues such as biodiversity, illegal logging, chemicals and mercury," said a European commission spokesperson.

Biodiversity and air pollution were identified as "serious and long-term" challenges alongside climate change.

On the eve of the summit, environment commissioner Stavros Dimas had suggested the Bush administration would show a willingness to discuss international carbon trading. "For the first time the US will come into a dialogue [on this]. It's a great change and a very important step towards our position," he told the European parliament's environment committee on Tuesday.

The dialogue will be guided by "the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC" and will first meet this autumn in Helsinki. It builds on existing initiatives and further advances implementation of the G8 Gleneagles plan of action on the same themes (EED 08/07/05).

The joint declaration issued after the summit also calls for accelerated investment in and development of, low pollution and low carbon technologies.

It calls for more and better use to be made of renewable energy sources. And it urges more responsible use of energy, in particular by cooperation to improve the efficiency of world-wide traded products.

1.3. More effort needed to reverse EU's greenhouse gases emission trends

22 June 2006, IP/06/820

Greenhouse gas emissions from the EU-15 member states rose by 0.3% between 2003 and 2004, says the European Commission. Despite this rise, EU-15 emissions stood 0.9% lower than in the base year (mostly 1990) even though the EU-15 recorded economic growth of 32% over the same period. Nevertheless greater efforts are needed to reduce EU-15 emissions to 8% below base year levels for the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period (2008-2012). The forthcoming national allocations of emission allowances for 2008-2012 under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme will be a crucial tool for ensuring member states achieve their Kyoto targets. EU-25 emissions, for which there is no collective Kyoto target, rose by 0.4% from 2003 to 2004 but were still 7.3% below base year levels.

"To meet our emissions reduction target member states need to intensify their efforts to implement the many EU measures to combat climate change that have been agreed over the past few years. With their new national allocation plans, due by the end of this month, member states now have a major opportunity to reverse unsustainable emission trends and ensure they will achieve their Kyoto targets. "It is very encouraging that we have broken the link between economic growth and greenhouse gas emissions, but this decoupling needs to be accelerated," Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said. The inventory for 2004, compiled by the European Environment Agency, shows an overall increase of 11.5 million tonnes, or 0.3%, in EU-15 emissions of greenhouse gases (expressed in CO2 equivalents) compared with 2003. Emissions rose in 10 of the EU-15 member states and fell in the five others.

The 0.3% rise brought down the reduction in EU-15 emissions since the base year to 0.9% in 2004 from 1.2% in 2003.

The 2004 increase in EU-15 emissions was mainly due to higher CO₂ emissions from road transport, iron and steel production and oil refining, as well as increased emissions of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) - one of the most powerful families of greenhouse gases - from refrigeration and air conditioning. On the positive side, there were falls in CO₂ emissions from households and services and from electricity and heat production, as well as reductions in emissions of methane from landfills and from coal mining and handling.

The 2004 result puts actual EU-15 emissions further above the level they are projected to be at if policies and measures agreed at EU level were fully implemented. The widening divergence between projected and actual emissions indicates that member states have been slow with implementation of their measures and need to accelerate their efforts.

This makes it all the more important that member states make their national allocation plans (NAPs) for 2008-2012 under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme strict enough to ensure that they meet their Kyoto targets. The NAPs will set a cap on overall emissions from the energy-intensive sectors producing almost half of the EU's CO₂ emissions. They will also determine how many emission credits member states intend to obtain from emission-saving projects in third countries. The NAPs must be submitted by 30 June, after which the Commission has three months to approve them or require changes.

Results from a number of member states also show that other EU and national measures are proving successful in decreasing emissions where implemented effectively. For example, Germany reduced its overall emissions by 0.9% in 2003-2004 as it increased the share of renewable energy sources in its electricity production from 7.9% to 9.4%. At the same time, Denmark's emissions fell by 8.1% as its renewables share rose from 13.4% to 14.2% and an energy efficiency drive helped reduce household energy consumption by 1.8%.

"Examples of successful implementation such as these need to be replicated across the EU to help ensure we reach our emissions targets," Commissioner Dimas underlined.

ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

2.1. Methane emissions twice official level - study

22 June 2006, The Guardian

James Randerson, science correspondent

Study claims output 92% above official figure. France also found to have higher reading.

The UK's emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas methane are nearly double what the government says they are, according to a global audit of methane emissions.

The study, which looked at how much methane is released into the air rather than extrapolating from known sources such as landfill sites, suggests that Britain's actual contribution is 92% up on what it declares under the Kyoto protocol. It also suggests that France is emitting 47% more methane than it declares.

The report in New Scientist today coincides with the latest round of figures on greenhouse gas emissions by the European Union. Climate-changing gases, excluding those from aviation and shipping, increased by 18m tonnes or 0.4% between 2003 and 2004. The UK's emissions rose by 0.2%. Environmental groups greeted the news with dismay. "[The figures] confirm our fear that the UK government is pretending to be a leader on climate change, but in reality it is a laggard," said Germana Canzi of Friends of the Earth.

Although methane emissions are much lower than carbon dioxide and the gas is broken down more quickly, it has a much more powerful warming effect. Over 100 years, a tonne of methane will cause 23 times as much warming as a tonne of CO₂.

Peter Bergamaschi of the European commission joint research centre at Ispra in Italy and his team set about calculating methane emissions from different countries independently of the internal estimates. He produced estimates based on the amount of methane in the atmosphere over the country. This involved collecting data from chemical detectors which sniff the air for methane.

Software then ran the recent weather backwards to work out where the gases must have been emitted. The study suggested that Germany had also underestimated its methane contribution by 62%. But during the course of Professor Bergamaschi's study Germany revised its estimate of national methane emissions upwards by around 70%, putting it in line with his figure.

Euan Nisbet, an expert on atmospheric science at Royal Holloway, University of London, said it was extremely difficult to estimate a country's methane emissions. He said governments should invest more in good-quality monitoring.

An earlier study by Professor Nisbet supports Prof Bergamaschi's results. He found that methane emissions in the London area in the late 1990s were 40% to 80% higher than declared by the government at the time.

2.2. IEA Warns G8 of Sharp Rise in CO2 Emissions

23 June 2006, Planet Ark Reuters

Emissions of climate-changing carbon dioxide could more than double by 2050 if unchecked, the International Energy Agency warned on Thursday, ahead of an energy-focussed meeting of G8 world leaders in July.

The Paris-based IEA, adviser to 26 industrialised nations, said in a report that it was possible for the world to emit less carbon dioxide (CO2) in 2050 than today while also increasing energy production.

But it warned that in the absence of new policies, global energy demand and CO2 emissions would more than double by 2050 to 58,000 billion tonnes. "We can find a sustainable energy future but it's not the case with the current trends. We're very far from that," IEA executive director Claude Mandil told a news conference.

The report, that draws different scenarios to 2050, is part of the Agency's response to the call from G8 leaders at the Geneagles summit in July 2005 for the IEA to advise on scenarios and strategies aimed at a clean and competitive future.

"It is no coincidence if we publish the book one month ahead of the G8 meeting in Saint Petersburg," Mandil said.

He added the most likely scenario to take place was a six percent rise in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, with a drop in emissions from the power industry but a rise from the transport sector.

But he said that to solve problems in the long term, the world should urgently improve energy efficiency and the development of capture and storage of CO2 (CCS).

"Improved energy efficiency is an indispensable component of any policy mix and is it available immediately," said Mandil.

He said that if the world failed to make CCS viable, the cost of mitigating CO2 emissions would be much higher.

Deploying CCS, along with more renewables, more nuclear and more efficient use of natural gas and coal, can significantly decarbonise global power generation by 2050, the IEA said.

"With the right policy incentives we think there is scope for renewables to quadruple by 2050 and for nuclear to gain a more important role where it is acceptable," he added.

"If we want to avoid the worse scenario there is a cost within reach of the world," Mandil said, adding that the IEA had supposed the cost per tonne of CO2 avoided at 25 dollars.

"It's less than the annual average price of CO2 on the European carbon market," he added.

Story by Muriel Boselli.

2.3. Ukraine Emissions Dive, Risk Swamping Kyoto

23 June 2006, Planet Ark Reuters

Ukraine's greenhouse gas emissions fell by a bigger than expected 57 percent in 2004 from 1990 levels, UN data showed on Thursday, potentially undermining wider climate change aims of the Kyoto Protocol.

Kyoto obliges 35 industrialised countries to cut emissions of heat-trapping gases overall by 5.2 percent by 2008-12 from 1990, but it allows countries whose emissions are over target to buy emissions reductions from those below.

Former communist countries' emissions have dived since 1990 because of an industrial collapse following their transition to liberalised markets, and while this is good news for climate change goals, it risks swamping the Kyoto trading tool.

The worry among green groups is that emissions cuts in eastern Europe are just because of the 1990 target baseline, and trading such margins would avoid real emissions cuts by other industrial countries.

Ukraine's Kyoto target is zero change on 1990 by 2008-12 and the 57 percent fall by 2004 would give it an annual 510 million tonnes carbon dioxide emissions reduction to sell.

This compares to an expected annual excess from 2008-12 of 200-300 million tonnes, according to the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

Ukraine is expected to have the second biggest such excess after Russia -- which has not yet published its 2004 data -- while Japan, Canada and the European Union are expected to be the furthest behind their Kyoto goals.

Ukraine's current surplus emissions reduction would exceed the expected annual demand for cuts of the EU, Japan and Canada combined between 2008-12 -- at 496 million tonnes CO₂ -- according to JBIC data.

But western countries will be under pressure to make up their emissions cuts elsewhere -- either by pollution reduction at home, or through a Kyoto Protocol trading tool called the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), where rich nations fund actual pollution cuts in poor ones.

The Ukraine report was posted on the UN website this week.

The European Union said on Thursday that greenhouse gas emissions by the 15 "old" nations of the now 25-member bloc rose by 0.3 percent in 2004, potentially leaving them further off-track on Kyoto.

Story by Gerard Wynn.

2.4. New data: EU emissions rise again - European governments continue to ignore climate crisis

25 May 2006, Friends of the Earth Europe

Friends of the Earth Europe have demanded urgent climate action from European governments, after new data reveals that overall EU emissions continue to rise. The latest figures, released by the European Commission today, show that EU emissions actually rose by 0.4% in 2004 relative to the previous year.

In 2004, the combined EU-15 emissions were only 0.9% below 1990 levels, meaning that the EU-15 is shamefully off-course to meet its international Kyoto Protocol obligations to cut greenhouse pollution by 8% by 2012.

Jan Kowalzig, climate campaigner at Friends of the Earth, said: "As these new figures embarrassingly show, our European leaders still haven't woken up to the climate crisis. Europe's governments make grand statements about their commitment to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, yet economy and industry Ministers continue to block or water down policy measures to switch to renewable energies, reduce energy waste or introduce fuel consumption standards for cars."

According to the new data, Spain, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, Italy, Finland, Denmark and Ireland are the worst performers, drifting furthest from their Kyoto emission targets. Across Europe, overall energy demand is on the rise, while renewable energy share to meet this demand is stagnating at around 6%. Also, the energy efficiency of the European economy shows only minor improvements over the past years.

Road and air transport are among the biggest culprits, with emissions from these sectors contributing most to the recent emissions increase. This is a result of a staggering growth in demand for cars and flights and because, for example, governments are failing to introduce binding fuel consumption standards for cars.

"Governments do not have the option to give global warming a backseat in favour of short term interests. The benefits of avoiding catastrophic climate change will clearly outweigh the costs of abatement policies. And switching to renewable energies will generate hundreds of thousands of new jobs throughout Europe and reduce the dependence on foreign energy imports at times of soaring oil & gas prices," Mr Kowalzig added.

Friends of the Earth Europe identifies 6 key areas for urgent action:

Emissions trading: In the 2008-2012 phase of the European Emissions Trading, the total amount of pollution permits given out to industry must be drastically reduced. Only if there is a shortage in permits will the trading lead to investments in cleaner technologies and reducing emissions.

Efficiency: Europe needs a binding target to cut energy consumption by 20% by 2020, through increasing efficiency, thereby also reducing energy costs for households and industry and curbing greenhouse gas pollution.

Renewables: By 2020, Europe should meet 25% of its primary energy demand from renewable sources, making Europe less dependent on imported fossil fuels and also reducing the hidden costs of conventional power generation.

Transport: Europe must reverse the unsustainable growth trends in the transport sector that uses up 70-80% of all oil imports into the EU and accounts for a third of Europe's total energy use.

Nuclear power: Europe must phase out expensive and dangerous nuclear energy that can not survive in a liberalised energy market, especially if the high costs of decommissioning and the long-term nuclear waste storage for thousands of years are taken into account.

Subsidies: Europe must remove perverse subsidies and other market distortions that keep dirty energy artificially cheap in comparison to its renewable competitors.

CONFERENCES

3.1. Sustainable Bioenergy - Challenges and Opportunities

October 12 and 13, Bonn, Germany, Wasserwerk - Former Parliament Building

Bioenergy, in particular biofuels, is becoming the most rapidly booming energy sector. Driven by the recent oil price escalations and climate change, alternatives to petroleum-based fuels are an increasingly attractive option for the transport sector. At the same time, policies to promote renewable energies and reduce greenhouse gas emission in many nations are making the production of electricity and heat from biomass competitive. Some countries could benefit from significant new export opportunities in the emerging global bioenergy market.

However, the bioenergy boom also poses significant questions: How can bioenergy be developed sustainably? What are the impacts going to be on agricultural land and natural habitats? What market barriers could impede its progress?

It is of vital importance that such concerns are addressed. Public and political support for bioenergy expansion depends on an overall positive contribution of bioenergy to all facets of sustainable development: environmental, economic and social development. The conference aims at discussing sustainability criteria that can serve as guidance for policymakers, civil society and business.

This international conference will be convened by the German NGO Forum Environment & Development and the United Nations Foundation. It will bring together experts from governments, NGOs, business and science for a series of dynamic presentations. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in interactive, multi-stakeholder workshop sessions to discuss the opportunities for bioenergy, assess sustainability challenges and try to identify viable solutions for responsible utilization of this important renewable energy source.

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PUBLICATIONS

4.1. Annual European Community greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2004 and inventory report 2006

Technical report No 6/2006, published at: http://reports.eea.europa.eu/technical_report_2006_6.

Abstract: This report is the annual submission of the greenhouse gas inventory of the European Community to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It presents greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2004 by individual Member State and by economic sector. The report shows that, between 2003 and 2004, emissions in the 15 pre-2004 Member States increased by 11.5 million tonnes, or 0.3% and total EU emissions increased by 0.4%.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

5.1. Emergency Legal Defence Fund – Can you help?

In an unprecedented move Friends of the Earth Scotland has just launched an emergency Legal Defence Fund appeal. The launch of the Defence Fund forms part of Friends of the Earth's attempt to halt Britain's biggest motorway building project - the £500 million Glasgow M74 Northern Extension.

Friends of the Earth is taking the Scottish Executive to court to challenge their decision to build the M74 extension - despite the scheme being roundly rejected by an independent public inquiry.

That court hearing will begin on 27 June.

Friends of the Earth urgently needs to secure at least £25,000 in donations or loans. The Legal Defence Fund is needed because the group could face a massive legal bill if the case is lost, putting jobs and important environmental and community projects at risk.

Please give your support at: <http://www.STOPtheM74.org>.

