

The EU on emissions: contradicting its own analysis

- The EU has a climate target of keeping global temperatures below a **2 degrees Celsius increase** compared with pre-industrialised temperatures. This was adopted in June 1996 at a Council of Ministers meeting in Luxembourg.¹²
- The European Union, at last years Spring Summit, has noted that to respect the 2 degrees limit, atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases would have to “**remain well below 550 ppm CO₂eq**”¹³. The truth is that for a 50/50 chance of meeting the 2°C target, concentrations need to stabilise **well below 450 ppm in the long term**. See also ³.
- In 1997, the then 15 member states of the European Union accepted a Kyoto target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 8 percent from 1990 levels by 2012.
- Seven of those 15 countries are set to miss their Kyoto targets. The seven countries are Spain, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Portugal. Spain, Denmark and Austria are the worst performers, adrift of their targets by 27%, 18% and 7% respectively.¹⁴
- Overall, the EU is expected to rely heavily on buying carbon credits on the global carbon market in order to reach the 8 % goal by 2012.¹⁵
- Meeting the 2°C target would require global emissions to peak around 2015/2020 and be cut in half by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. Industrialised countries would have to make the biggest cuts, since they are not only mostly responsible for the problem but also have higher per-capita emissions than developing countries. The EU’s per capita emissions are about 11 tons per citizen per year, which is twice the world average and about 4 times higher than where emissions should be in the year 2050. Consequently, the EU must cut their emissions by 80% by 2050 and by at least 30% by 2020¹⁶.
- The European Commission itself recently acknowledged the need for 30% cuts by developed countries¹⁷. However, the Commission proposed only a 20% reduction target by 2020 (compared to 1990 levels) for the EU to adopt unilaterally, until other industrialised countries are ready to set a 30% target for themselves¹⁸. The Energy Council and the Environment Council have approved this target, and it is now up to the EU Spring Summit on 8th and 9th March to finally approve it.

¹² http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_6667_en.htm

¹³

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/17&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en#fnB2>

¹⁴ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/pressroom/newsreleases/ghgtrends2006-en>

¹⁵ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/pressroom/newsreleases/ghgtrends2006-en>

¹⁶ Per capita emissions are from the CAIT project of the World Resource Institute. For the regional distribution of required emission cuts see Meeting the EU 2 degrees Celsius climate target: global and regional emission implications; Michel den Elzen and Malte Meinshausen; available at <http://www.mnp.nl/bibliotheek/rapporten/728001031.pdf>

¹⁷ See for example http://europa.eu/press_room/presspacks/energy/iasummarysec7.pdf

¹⁸ See “Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius, The Way Ahead for 2020 and Beyond”. COM (2007) 2 final, 10 January 2007