

Green groups push for annual emission cuts targets

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The lead singer of UK pop group Radiohead, Thom Yorke, was in Brussels on Wednesday (27 February) to call on the European institutions and the EU's member states to go further than what was announced in the European Commission's climate and energy package proposals – and adopt a binding framework for annual emission cuts targets.

"Without such a framework, the business lobbyists will manage to water down what [member states] have to do," said Mr Yorke who was in Brussels to meet environment commissioner Stavros Dimas and promote the launch of a pan-European climate change campaign from Friends of the Earth.

Mr Yorke, along with Tony Juniper, the head of Friends of the Earth in the UK, also warned that without a framework for year-on-year targets, within 10 to 15 years, more extreme measures such as mandatory carbon rationing for individuals would be necessary.

"If a framework isn't in place, rationing would be needed in order for everyone to feel equal, and not be singled out," said the singer.

Mr Juniper went further, saying: "There's a great deal of merit to tradeable individual emissions quotas, of, say, one tonne of carbon a piece per year."

"We think that's the fairest way to make everyone share the burden. But the European public discourse isn't there yet; it's not so feasible. Which is why we're pushing for the year-on-year framework now. However, in a few years, it may well be that the debate in Europe has advanced so far that rationing will become feasible." he said.

The EU has agreed that carbon dioxide emissions should be cut by 20 percent by 2020. It emissions trading scheme for industry, and in the future including airlines, is one of the bloc's key policies for achieving the goal.

Commissioner Dimas welcomed the campaign. "Help [from green groups] is clearly invaluable in pushing the package through the co-decision procedure," said the commissioner, referring to the next steps for passage of the commission's proposals.

The campaign hopes to replicate on a European level what was ultimately a successful effort in the UK involving hundreds of thousands of citizens lobbying their MPs to get the British government to adopt year-on-year targets instead of a single long-term goal.

A commission official said that the emissions trading scheme (ETS) will in effect deliver the linear year-on-year emissions cuts the green group is asking for, and for industrial sectors that are not covered by the ETS, there are binding annual targets that if flouted can be addressed by infringement proceedings going through the European Court of Justice.

But Sonja Meister, the green group's European climate campaigner said that this process can take up to seven years - a judicial time-scale that is not workable for so imminent a problem.

"It's a bit of a joke that there's a seven-year process for punishing infringements of annual targets," she said.

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