

To:

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

Executive Vice President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič

European Commissioner, Wopke Hoekstra

President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola

President of the European Council, Charles Michel

Prime Minister of Belgium, Alexander De Croo

Belgium Federal Minister of Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and the Green Deal,
Zakia Khattabi

Wallonia Vice President and Minister of Climate, Energy, Mobility and Infrastructure, Philippe Henry
Flanders Minister for Justice and Enforcement, Environment and Spatial Development, Energy and
Tourism, Zuhair Demir

Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Climate Change,
Environment, Energy and Participatory Democracy, Alain Maron

Statement from the Coalition for Higher Ambition on the EU 2040 Climate Target

We are writing to you on behalf of an alliance of European business and investor organisations, local and regional governments, and civil society organisations, to urge the European Commission's upcoming Communication on the EU 2040 climate target to support a bold, science-aligned ambition level.

The window of opportunity to avoid the most dangerous climate change by keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C is rapidly closing. With current global warming getting closer to this safer threshold, and temperatures in Europe already reaching 2.1°C above pre-industrial levels¹, climate change impacts such as heat waves, droughts, floodings, forest fires are already hitting heavily across the globe as well as in Europe. These impacts are causing disruptive damage, unprecedented biodiversity loss, threatening people's safety and livelihoods, particularly for the most vulnerable, and increasingly harming the economy. Current plans from countries to reduce emissions mark an alarming global ambition gap² to meet the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement, and all Parties need to step up their efforts, in view of their respective historical responsibility in causing the climate crisis and their capacity to act upon it. The outcome of COP28 signals that the direction of travel is moving away from fossil fuels; it is now up to countries to translate this commitment into national targets and measures aligned with science that deliver on the 1.5°C temperature goal in an equitable manner.

¹European Environmental Agency (2023). Global and European temperatures.

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/global-and-european-temperatures>

Copernicus Climate Change Service (2024). Global Climate Highlights 2023.

<https://climate.copernicus.eu/global-climate-highlights-2023>

²See, among others: IPCC AR6 (2023). Synthesis Report, Summary for Policy-makers.

https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6syr/pdf/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf;

Climate Action Tracker (2022). Warming Projections Global Update.

https://climateactiontracker.org/documents/1094/CAT_2022-11-10_GlobalUpdate_COP27.pdf

While delaying climate action will imply dramatic costs for society and the economy, acting timely and decisively will bring a wide range of benefits³. Undertaking the accelerated, ambitious and just green transition requires a systemic change through taking action across all sectors of the economy, including on energy, transport, housing, resource production and consumption, land use, public and private finance; for and with all actors of the society. Properly designed and comprehensive actions across these areas will, at the same time, enable the creation of jobs and economic opportunities, improve people's health and well-being, combat poverty and ensure social protection, safeguard natural resources, achieve the Union's energy security, increase competitiveness and resilience, and strengthen the EU's role as a global frontrunner.

Ahead of the European Parliament elections, it is vital to show that the socially just transition towards climate neutrality is indispensable to ensure long-term resilience, peace and political stability. Swiftly phasing out all fossil fuels and investing in the transformation of the ways we produce and consume will spur innovation towards a clean, circular and competitive industry that can provide safe and decent work, driving a raise in ambition of global standards. A robust vision for the 2040 milestone in the EU decarbonisation pathway will provide the necessary framework for businesses and financial markets to mobilise the needed investments⁴ to transform the EU economy to align it to the 1.5°C temperature limit. At the same time, the ambition has to live up to the EU's responsibility at the global level, given its role as an historic emitter and an affluent region. Adopting a sound, science-based 2040 climate target will send a clear signal to people, businesses and investors in Europe and the rest of the world that the EU is committed to ensure a resilient, healthier and fairer future society and economy and to fulfil its fair share in limiting dangerous climate change.

In its report on the EU 2040 climate target⁵, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC) recommended that, to ensure at least 50% chance to meet the 1.5°C goal, the 2040 target should be set at -90%-95% net emission reductions, compared to 1990 levels, noting that pursuing the most ambitious end of the range would improve the fairness of the EU's contribution.

We, as members of the Coalition for Higher Ambition, urge you to propose and endorse a science-based EU 2040 climate target that is aligned with the recommendations of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change of at least -90% net emission reductions by 2040 (relative to 1990 levels). This ambition level has been publicly endorsed by the EU Commission's Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal Šefčovič and the Climate Commissioner Hoekstra, and is also demanded by the Danish Government⁶. Some members of the Coalition, in line with what was highlighted by the latest IPCC synthesis report

³See, among others: IPCC AR6 (2023). Synthesis Report, Summary for Policy-makers.

https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6syr/pdf/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf;

Burke, M., Davis, W.M. & Diffenbaugh, N.S. Large potential reduction in economic damages under UN mitigation targets. *Nature* 557, 549–553 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0071-9>

⁴According to the European Commission, already over 620 additional billion euros annually are needed to meet the sole objectives of the Green Deal and RepowerEU. See: European Commission. Questions and Answers on the Sustainable Finance Package (2023).

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_23_3194

⁵ESABCC (2023). Scientific advice for the determination of an EU-wide 2040 climate target and a greenhouse gas budget for 2030.

<https://climate-advisory-board.europa.eu/reports-and-publications/scientific-advice-for-the-determination-of-an-eu-wide-2040/scientific-advice-for-the-determination-of-an-eu-wide-2040-climate-target-and-a-greenhouse-gas-budget-for-2030-2050.pdf@@@display-file/file>

⁶ Agence France Presse (2023). Denmark Urges EU To Cut Emissions 90% By 2040.

<https://www.barrons.com/news/denmark-urges-eu-to-cut-emissions-90-by-2040-17ac2ac2>

and the UN Secretary General António Guterres⁷, support efforts for the EU achieving net zero emissions by 2040 at the latest⁸.

After setting an ambitious 2040 target under the EU Climate Law, a participatory revision of the EU's Long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy (LTS)⁹ under the UNFCCC and the update of the national Long Term Strategies (nLTS) will have to follow, to align long-term climate plans with the 1.5°C objective of the Paris Agreement.

We are confident that you will take this urgent call into due account and we count on you to secure the protection of our planet and the well-being of people in Europe.

We remain at your disposal to further discuss ways on how to deliver together an inclusive and sustainable climate transition in Europe.

SIGNATORIES



CDP Europe

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

Corporate Leaders Group Europe

European Alliance to Save Energy (EU-ASE)

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

⁷See March 2023, Secretary-General Calls on States to Tackle Climate Change.

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21730.doc.htm>

And IPCC AR6 (2023). Synthesis Report, Summary for Policy-makers.

https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6syr/pdf/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf

⁸<https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2023/10/2023.06.22-Position-Paper-on-EU-climate-targets-and-equitable-GHG-budget.docx.pdf>

⁹ <https://unfccc.int/documents/210328>

European Heat Pump Association (EHPA)

European Industrial Insulation Foundation (EiiF)

ICLEI Europe – Local Governments for Sustainability

Naturefriends International (NFI)

Adam White, Secretary-General, RECS Energy Certificate Association

Solar Heat Europe/European Solar Thermal Industry Federation (ESTIF)

SOLIDAR

Transport & Environment (T&E)

We Mean Business Coalition