

Background brief

17 September 2025

Environment Council

18 September 2025, Brussels

PRESS

EN

Chair: Lars Aagaard, Minister for Climate, Energy and Utilities of Denmark

Commission representative: Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth

Starting time: 10:00

Media opportunities:

- Doorstep by Minister Aagaard: 18 September 2025, 9:00
- Press conference: 18 September 2025, 16:40 (TBC)

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Main agenda topics:

The main points of discussion include a policy debate on the proposal for **amendment to the European climate law**, which establishes an intermediate net emissions reduction target of 90% for 2040, and a **statement of intent in view of submitting the EU's nationally determined contribution (NDC)** ahead of COP30.

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[Meeting page on the Council website](#)

[Press conferences, doorsteps and other public events in video streaming](#)

[High quality photo and video material](#)

European Climate Law – 2040 climate target (in public session)

Ministers will hold a policy debate on the proposal to amend the European Climate Law, which introduces a new, intermediate net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target of **90%** for 2040 (compared to 1990).

The proposal outlines the key elements that the European Commission should reflect in its proposals on the post-2030 policy framework to enable member states to achieve the 2040 target. These elements include **flexibilities** such as a limited use of high-quality **international credits** under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the inclusion of **permanent removals** in the EU ETS to offset residual emissions from hard-to-abate sectors and enhanced **flexibility between sectors** to support the achievement of targets in a cost-effective way. Additionally, the proposal lays out a series of elements that the Commission should reflect in proposals for the post-2030 framework, such as the principles of **cost-efficiency** and **solidarity**, the impacts of climate change in the **land use sector** and investment needs and opportunities. The proposal also highlights the importance of enabling conditions to support European industry and citizens throughout the transition, which include ensuring the **competitiveness of the EU's industry** and the need to ensure a **just and socially fair transition**.

Adopted in 2021, the European climate law set a binding economy-wide **climate neutrality target by 2050**, with net emissions reduced to zero by that date. It also introduced a binding climate target for 2030 of reducing net emissions by at least 55%, while providing for the establishment of an EU-wide intermediate climate target for 2040.

Discussions on the future 2040 target have been ongoing since the publication of the Commission communication 'Europe's 2040 target' on 6 February 2024. Ministerial debates were held at the Environment Council on 25 March, 17 June and 17 December 2024. On 2 July 2025, the Commission put forward a proposal to amend the European climate law to set a 2040 target. The topic was also addressed during an exchange of views at the informal Environment Council on 17 June 2025 under the agenda item 'the EU at COP30'.

To steer the debate, the presidency invited the ministers to assess progress and give further guidance for the way forward, including on the role of international credits and natural sinks, as well as other enabling elements in the post-2030 framework.

[Proposal to amend the European climate law](#) (European Commission)

[European climate law](#)

[Climate change: what the EU is doing](#) (background information)

[Fit for 55](#) (background information)

The EU's statement of intent on the post-2030 NDC

During the meeting, ministers will also discuss and seek to approve a **statement of intent** on the EU's post-2030 nationally determined contribution (NDC). This draft statement outlines the EU's intention to reduce GHG emissions by a target range for 2035 based on the existing EU climate legislation and targets, and the proposed 2040 target currently under negotiation. The statement of intent will be communicated to the UNFCCC but **does not represent the official EU's NDC**. The aim is to submit an updated NDC at a later stage ahead of COP30 (10-21 November 2025).

NDCs are an integral part of the **Paris Agreement**, which requires each party to communicate its post-2020 climate actions with the aim of advancing towards the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

NDCs set out the efforts each country will make to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Parties to the Paris Agreement are required to communicate their NDCs every five years. Based on the submissions received, the UNFCCC Secretariat will prepare an NDC synthesis report, which provides an overview of global emission reduction commitments and the ambition gap relative to the Paris Agreement goals. The EU submits a single NDC on behalf of member states.

[Paris Agreement on climate change](#) (background information)

[Global climate action](#) (background information)

[Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#) (UNFCCC website)