Climate: EU emissions down 2.5 percent in 2011

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A smoke stack stands in an abandoned industrial plant in the town of Lom, some 100 kms north of the capital of Sofia, in Bulgaria. European greenhouse gas emissions fell by 2.5 percent in 2011 over 2010, as a mild winter and increase in renewable energy use offset a rise in coal consumption and economic activity, estimates released on Friday said.

European greenhouse gas emissions fell by 2.5 percent in 2011 over 2010, as a mild winter and increase in renewable energy use offset a rise in coal consumption and economic activity, estimates released on Friday said.

In 2010, emissions by the 27 European Union (EU) states rose by 2.4 percent compared to 2009 levels, the Copenhagen-headquartered European Environment Agency (EEA) said.

Among the 15 western European economies which preceded the EU's "Big Bang" membership expansion in 2004, emissions fell back by 3.5 percent in 2011.

That brought the EU-15 emissions down to 14.1 percent below 1990, well on track for meeting a collective eight percent reduction by the end of 2012 under the UN's Kyoto Protocol.

The EU-27 do not have a joint target under Kyoto, but they have promised unilaterally to reduce emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

At the end of last year, their emissions were 17.5 percent below this benchmark, the EEA said.

The estimates exclude data for carbon "sinks"—forests whose carbon absorption can be counted against emissions targets under Kyoto rules—and emissions from aviation and shipping.

In August, the United States said energy-related US carbon emissions fell by 2.4 percent in 2011 over 2010, partly due to a warmer winter that pared heating needs and greater use of natural gas compared with coal.

According to UN figures issued in November 2011, worldwide greenhouse-gas levels rose to a record high in 2010.

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