

EU on track for climate targets

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Activists and environmentalists protest for renewable energy in front of the hotel in Budapest on May 2, 2011

The European Union is on track to meet its 2020 targets for reducing carbon emissions and switching to cleaner energy sources, its environmental watchdog said on Wednesday.

By the end of 2012, the EU had reduced its output of heat-trapping greenhouse gases by nearly 18 percent compared to the benchmark year of 1990.

"It is already close to the target of 20-percent emissions reduction by 2020," the European Environment Agency (EEA) said in a report.

Recently-published data pointed to a drop in EU emissions of almost one percent in 2012 over 2011.

The EU is also on track to meet a goal of having renewable sources account for 20 percent of energy consumption in 2020.

As of 2011, renewables accounted for 13 percent, above the EU's mid-way target of 11.7 percent for 2011 and 2012.

However, the picture is less rosy for the EU's third objective for 2020, of securing a 20-percent gain in [energy efficiency](#).

Only four members—Bulgaria, Denmark, France and Germany—"are making good progress," said the report.

"For most EU member states, however, the current policies are not sufficiently developed or implemented across the relevant sectors," the report said.

"This is due to insufficient enforcement as well as impacts arising from the economic crisis."

Fifteen EU members signed a pledge under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to reduce [greenhouse gases](#) by eight percent by a timeframe of 2008-2012 compared to 1990.

They have greatly exceeded this, achieving a cut of 12.2 percent, said the report.

"Overall, the combined performance of all EU-15 member states is

equivalent to an over-achievement of approximately 236 million tonnes" of carbon per year, or 5.5 percent of their [emissions](#) in 1990, the report said.

There are three laggards, though: Austria, Luxembourg and Spain, which will have to buy a large quantity of carbon credits in order to meet their Kyoto targets.

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