

Emission reductions hampered by EU internal policy processes, new research finds

October 12 2016

Transport is a significant and growing contributor to climate change. To play its part in achieving 'safe' global warming levels, substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector are needed. Within the European Union, pledges have been made to reduce the sector's emissions of greenhouse gases by 20% by 2020, and 40% by 2030, compared to 1990.

The international team of researchers from Linnaeus University, The University of Surrey and Buckinghamshire New University interviewed policy officers in three Directorates-General of the European Commission on responsibilities for policy development and implementation, their understanding of mitigation goals and timelines, and whether the policy process is on track to achieve climate objectives for the transport sector.

The surprising results showed that:

- Existing policies are seen to lack sufficient ambition and there is internal disagreement over who is responsible for policy development.
- Scarcity of data is regarded as a problem, especially in knowing whether the EU is on track to meet targets.
- Some policy officers are favouring economic goals over environmental ones, and their own professional backgrounds in industry are creating a bias towards serving the interests of industry lobby groups.

- There is seen to be unfair lenience towards the aviation and automobile industries.
- Policy officers are pinning their hopes on new 'silver bullet' technologies that do not yet, and probably will not, exist, to help reduce emissions.
- Stronger leadership on climate mitigation for the transport sector is needed at the highest levels within and between the Directorates-General.

Co-author of the study, Dr Scott Cohen from the University of Surrey said: "With the share of transport emissions increasing from 18.8% in 1990 to 25.3% in 2012 and with the likelihood of this number continuing to rise, it has become crucial to address climate change objectives specifically in the transport sector.

"Our study has revealed that there are fundamental problems with the European Union's policy processes governing the climate change targets. It is clear that these need to be addressed urgently if we are to have any hope of introducing transport policies that will have any significance in global efforts to mitigate climate change."

More information: Stefan Gössling et al, Inside the black box: EU policy officers' perspectives on transport and climate change mitigation, *Journal of Transport Geography* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2016.10.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2016.10.002)

Provided by University of Surrey

Citation: Emission reductions hampered by EU internal policy processes, new research finds (2016, October 12) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-10-emission-reductions-hampered-eu-internal.html>

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