

# EU leaders fail to set 2050 target of zero net carbon emissions

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After climate change became a central issue in May's EU elections, the bloc has moved to set a more ambitious emissions target

European Union leaders failed Thursday to set a target of zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, amid opposition from Poland and

other coal-dependent eastern European countries, summit sources said.

Nonetheless, they added, a large majority of the 28 leaders endorsed the mid-century target under growing public and [political pressure](#) to step up the fight against [climate change](#).

German Chancellor Angela Merkel had boosted momentum toward a deal when she endorsed for the first time the target of having the bloc produce no more emissions than it absorbs by 2050.

The failure to reach unanimous agreement angered environmental groups like Greenpeace and also the Greens in the European Parliament.

"The [climate](#) can't wait but not all heads of state and government want to realise that," Greens co-leader Ska Keller tweeted. "Saving the planet should be a priority for all of us!"

Poland was supported by Hungary and the Czech Republic in opposing the 2050 target, a Polish source said on condition of anonymity.

The source said the eastern countries needed to know how the transition to a green economy would be financed and if it would be supported by the EU budget before agreeing such a big goal.

"If we don't know how the compensation mechanism does look like, we cannot agree," the Polish source said.

A source in the entourage of French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country helped broker the 2015 Paris climate agreement, argued that the leaders actually achieved a good result.

"We did not get unanimity but 24 member states is good. And as it's important, we did not yield on the 2050 target, and 24 made this pledge,"

the French source said.

The commitment is mentioned in a footnote to the conclusions of the meeting, several summit sources said.

EU sources said earlier in the week a unanimous agreement was unlikely this week and more likely at the December summit.

## **'They blew it'**

The task of hitting the 2050 target would fall on both the member states and the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, which is due to be reconstituted following elections in May and begin a new term in November.

"Strategically it is the most important issue for the next five-year commission," an EU diplomat told journalists before the summit to debate appointments for the new commission chief and other top jobs.

The growing stress on climate action comes after Green parties made substantial gains in May's European Parliament elections.

Spurred by a wave of student strikes, voters in many countries highlighted climate concerns and the parliament's main political blocs for the first time adopted [climate action](#) as a rallying cry.

Greenpeace EU climate policy adviser Sebastian Mang denounced the failure to reach unanimous agreement at a time of growing scientific warnings and calls on the streets for action.

"They blew it," Mang said.

"European leaders must call for an emergency EU climate summit to

salvage Europe's credibility ahead of a crucial UN meeting in September," he said.

He and other activists said June was the "last official opportunity" for EU leaders to set a higher target before the UN secretary general's Global Climate Action Summit on September 23 when up to 80 countries will likely improve their pledges.

Warnings have multiplied since 2015 when 195 countries meeting in Paris sealed a landmark agreement to keep temperature rises well below two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial levels.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) warned in October that warming is on track towards a catastrophic 3C or 4C rise, and avoiding global chaos will require a major transformation.

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