

Germany sets more ambitious climate goals after landmark ruling

May 5 2021, by Kit Holden



The government now expects to slash emissions by 65 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels

The German government said Wednesday it would set more ambitious targets to reduce CO₂ emissions after a landmark ruling by the country's

top court declared a flagship climate protection law "insufficient".

Under the new targets, the government expects to slash emissions by 65 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, going further than the current 55 percent reduction target, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said at a press conference in Berlin.

The cut will reach 88 percent by 2040, with the goal of bringing Germany to carbon neutrality by 2045, five years earlier than previously expected.

"We want to make our goals more precise," Scholz said, adding that the "ambitious but achievable" reform would be reviewed by the cabinet next week.

The new move, criticised by activists as insufficient, comes after Germany's Constitutional Court ruled last Thursday that the original national emissions goals flouted the rights of younger people because they omitted targets for reductions beyond 2030.

The current climate protection law risked to "irreversibly offload major emission reduction burdens" onto the period after 2030, thereby "violating the freedoms" of future generations, the court said.

It ordered an improved plan to be put forward by December 2022.

The government's accelerated reaction comes as environmental issues are fast becoming a flashpoint in September elections.

For the first time, both Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives are feeling the heat from the ecologist Greens.

Buoyed in part by the youth movement Fridays for Future school strikes,

the Greens are leading popularity surveys less than five months before a general election.

Poll pressure

Under pressure to show it is taking environmental issues seriously ahead of September's elections, Merkel's outgoing right-left coalition government has said it aims to revise its climate targets before the end of its term.

"The constitutional court ruling has put wind in the sails of climate protection," said Environment Minister Svenja Schulze at Wednesday's press conference.

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