

Germany likely missed climate target again, activists angry

January 4 2023, by Frank Jordans



A bucket wheel excavator is mining coal at the Garzweiler open-cast coal mine with wind turbines in the background in Luetzerath, Germany, Wednesday, Nov. 2, 2022. Data published Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2023 by a respected environmental think tank shows Germany likely missed its target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions last year, despite a massive effort by the new government to expand the use of renewable energy. Credit: AP Photo/Michael Probst, File

Data published Wednesday by a respected environmental think tank indicates Germany likely missed its target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions again last year, despite a big effort by the new government to expand the renewable energy use.

Agora Energiewende think tank said in a report that the country released the equivalent of 761 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, the main planet-warming gas, in 2022. This was slightly below the previous year but still above Germany's target of cutting emissions by 40% by 2020.

While Germany met its target in 2020, that was largely due to the pandemic-related economic downturn. Emissions rose again as the economy rebounded over the following two years, when they were meant to decrease further.

Germany's economy minister said official figures won't be released until mid-March, but noted that higher emissions from [coal-fired power plants](#) reactivated to make up for a lack of Russian gas had been balanced out by energy-saving measures and renewable power generation.

Robert Habeck, a member of the environmentalist Green party whose ministerial portfolio also covers energy and [climate](#), said new measures to boost wind and solar power generation would take effect in 2023. But he expressed concern over the lack of emissions cuts in the [transport sector](#), describing it as a "problem child" that requires urgent attention.

Climate activists, meanwhile, have blasted Habeck and his party for supporting plans to bulldoze a tiny village in western Germany to make way for a nearby coal mine.

Protesters camped out in Luetzerath clashed with police earlier this week, and more demonstrations are planned at the site ahead of Jan. 10,

when utility company RWE is expected to raze the ancient hamlet.

About 150 people gathered outside Habeck's ministry Wednesday to protest against the expansion of the Garzweiler coal mine that will swallow Luetzerath, claiming that a compromise reached last year between the government and RWE will result in more emissions, not fewer.

"This coal deal between the Greens and RWE is a black box that leads to climate catastrophe," said campaigner Luisa Neubauer.

"This is something we won't agree to. It's diametrically opposed to the Paris climate agreement," she said, adding that Luetzerath sits atop of hundreds of millions of tons of coal.

The government has acknowledged that achieving the next big climate milestone—a reduction of emissions by 65% in 2030 compared with 1990 levels—will be a major challenge. Germany, which is home to many energy-intensive industries, aims to cut its emissions to "net zero" by 2045.

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