

EU pushes cut in car emissions, boost for electric vehicles

8 November 2017, by Frank Jordans And Angela Charlton



Cars and trucks queue on the highway A5 in Frankfurt, Germany, Monday, Nov. 6, 2017. The World Climate Conference with 25 000 people participating starts on Monday in Bonn, Germany. (AP Photo/Michael Probst)

The European Commission said Wednesday it wants to cut emissions of carbon dioxide from cars by 30 percent by 2030, and boost the use of electric vehicles by making them cheaper and easier to charge.

The proposal stops short of imposing fixed quotas for emission-free vehicles and is more modest than goals already set out by some EU members. Still, European automakers said the new targets were too drastic.

Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic insisted that the plan is the most "realistic" compromise between Europe's ambitions to blaze trails on clean energy and the costs that the continent's powerful car manufacturers will have to bear to overhaul workforces and production.

Current targets require automakers to achieve the average permitted emission for new models in the

European Union of 95 grams of CO₂ per kilometer for cars, or 147 grams for light commercial vehicles by 2021.

The new proposal foresees a further reduction of 15 percent by 2025 and 30 percent by 2030, compared to 2021 levels.

Car companies that fail to meet those targets face substantial fines of 95 euros (\$110) per excess gram of carbon dioxide—per car. Automakers that manage to equip at least 30 percent of their new cars with electric or other low-emission engines by 2030 will be given credits toward their carbon tally.

The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, an industry body, criticized the 2025 target, saying "it does not leave enough time to make the necessary technical and design changes to vehicles, in particular to light commercial vehicles given their longer development and production cycles."

The lobby group also said the targeted cut of 30 percent by 2030 was "overly challenging" and called for a 20 percent reduction instead, saying that was "achievable at a high, but acceptable, cost."

"The current proposal is very aggressive when we consider the low and fragmented market penetration of alternatively-powered vehicles across Europe to date," the group's secretary general, Erik Jonnaert, said.

The European executive's plan also includes 800 million euros in funding for the expansion and standardization of electric charging stations Europe-wide.

The proposal is part of EU efforts to meet commitments under the Paris climate accord. U.N. member states are meeting in Germany from Nov. 6-17 to discuss how to implement the 2015

agreement, which called for a sharp fall in carbon emissions to curb global warming.

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APA citation: EU pushes cut in car emissions, boost for electric vehicles (2017, November 8) retrieved 26 May 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-11-eu-car-emissions-boost-electric.html>

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