EU to cut new car emissions by 37.5 percent by 2030

18 December 2018, by Marine Laouchez And Lachlan Carmichael

The automobile industry meanwhile has strongly rallied against the move to cut emissions warning that it could affect jobs

The European Union forged ahead Tuesday with plans to slash carbon dioxide emissions from new cars and vans by 2030 despite industry concerns the targets are for now "totally unrealistic."

EU member countries and the European Parliament struck the ambitious deal late Monday that Brussels said would help the bloc meet its commitments under the Paris climate accord.

The targets will require new cars sold in 2030 to emit 37.5 percent less carbon dioxide on average compared to 2021 levels. Emissions from new vans will have to be 31 percent lower.

"With these ambitious targets, Europe is once again showing how to turn the #ParisAgremeent and #COP24 into action," tweeted Miguel Arias Canete, the European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel.

Ambassadors from EU countries are to expected to endorse the deal in Brussels as soon as Wednesday, just days after the COP24 summit in Poland aimed at breathing new life into the 2015 Paris climate deal.

The auto emissions deal is a compromise between the demands of states like Germany which wanted a more modest cut of 30 percent and the European Parliament which had wanted a reduction of 40 percent.

Siding with Germany, the bloc's biggest auto producer, were several eastern EU countries. France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Ireland backed the parliament's more ambitious goal.

Elisabeth Kostinger, who chaired the talks under the union's Austrian six-month EU presidency, described the negotiations leading to the deal as "tough and tense."

But she added she was confident the EU member countries would endorse it.

The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) expressed "serious concerns about the highly challenging CO_2 targets" that the industry will have to meet in 12 years.

'Political motives'

The target "might sound plausible, but is totally unrealistic based on where we stand today," ACEA said.

ACEA said the goals flowed from "political motives" that failed to account for hurdles to consumers buying more electric and other alternatively powered vehicles.

These include the relatively high cost and a so far thin network of recharging and refuelling stations, it said in a statement.

But it said the association's members will continue to invest in producing cleaner vehicles.

ACEA called on the 28 EU countries and the European Commission, the EU executive arm, to make "the much-needed investments in infrastructure."

The EU has already promised to broaden the network of recharging stations.

ACEA warned that targets "will have a seismic impact on jobs" in an industry that employs some 13.3 million Europeans.

It urged policy makers to "act swiftly" to present plans that will help workers learn new skills required for building cleaner cars.

In contrast to the auto industry, the European federation of transport NGOs, Transport & Environment (T&E), said the target was a step in the right direction but not good enough.

"Europe is shifting up a gear in the race to produce zero emission cars," said Greg Archer, clean vehicles director at T&E.

"The new law means by 2030 around a third of new cars will be electric or hydrogen-powered. That's progress but it's not fast enough to hit our climate goals," Archer said.

Karima Delli, a Greens Party member in the European Parliament, said the new targets did not do enough to encourage investments and new jobs to transition the industry toward zero emissions.

Under the COP21 agreement in Paris, the EU pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions (like those of carbon dioxide and methane) by 40 percent of 1990 levels by 2030, in all economic sectors.

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