

# EU parliament votes for 60% greenhouse gas emissions cut by 2030

## Backing for law demanding 60% reduction from 1990 levels puts capitals under pressure



Pascal Canfin and the youth activist Greta Thunberg in March. The chair of the EU parliament's environment committee has said the cost of inaction is too high. Photograph: Isopix/Rex/Shutterstock

### **Daniel Boffey** in Brussels

Thu 8 Oct 2020 13.30 BST

EU capitals have been put under pressure to agree to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 compared with 1990, after the European parliament voted in favour of an “ambitious” climate law that would also oblige each member state to be carbon neutral by 2050.

The vote, which sets the chamber's position as it goes into negotiations with the 27 member states and the European commission, won the backing of 392 MEPs, with 161 voting against and 142 abstaining.

Speaking to the Guardian, Pascal Canfin, the chair of the chamber's environment committee, who proposed the 2030 target, said he was convinced

the position would drive member countries to raise their sights when their representatives sit together in the EU setting known as the council.

The parliament's vote was a rejection of a 55% emissions reduction target for 2030 proposed by the commission, the EU's executive body led by Ursula von der Leyen. "Having the parliament supporting 60% helps the progressive countries in the council to drive ambition upwards," Canfin said.

Following the vote, Finland's environment minister, Krista Mikkonen, said she would propose that her government update its national position in line with that of the EU parliament.

There are concerns that the opening demand will lead to a prolonged negotiation over a compromise position during so-called "trilogue" discussions of parliament, council and commission ahead of a vote on the final deal by the chamber.

Before that discussion, the 27 EU capitals will need to come to a decision by qualified majority on their opening position, with countries such as Poland, where coal-fuelled energy is widespread, likely to push back against the more ambitious targets.

But Canfin said the parliament was "ambitious on substance and on timeline". He said: "We will not accept trade-offs between the two. We have to have a political agreement on the climate law before 12 December – the fifth anniversary of the Paris agreement and the entry into force of this agreement.

"It would be such a pity for the EU and such a setback for the German presidency of the EU not to be ready for that moment that I can't imagine this scenario."

Germany's hold on the rolling presidency ends at the end of the year, after which Portugal will take on the responsibility.

The large number of abstentions on the climate law vote came after the leader of the centre-right European People's party, Manfred Weber, advised his members that the 2030 target was a "shot in the dark" that would lead to job losses by making European companies uncompetitive.

The German MEP **had tweeted**: “With the climate law, Europe is leading the battle against climate change. But this will not be easy! -55% CO<sub>2</sub> is a huge challenge for companies in Europe. If we don’t get this right, we will lose those jobs to China or the USA. The -60% target is a shot in the dark.

“Our climate decisions should speak to all of society, not only to the wealthy. Not everyone can afford an electric car! The most vulnerable citizens should not pay the highest price for our climate targets. We will not succeed if our climate law is not inclusive.”

Canfin pointed to reports from groups such as the International Labour Organisation highlighting the job creation that would come with a swift move away from fossil fuels towards greener industries. He said: “There is no trade-off between prosperity and climate action. On the contrary, the cost of inaction is much higher than the cost of action.”