

Small cut in EU's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2016 but transport emissions keep increasing



Image © Ben Koorengevel on Unsplash

The EEA's '[Annual European Union greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2016 and inventory report 2018](#)' shows a 0.4 % decrease in the total EU greenhouse gas emissions in 2016, compared with 2015. From 1990 to 2016, the EU has reduced its net greenhouse gas emissions by 22.4 %, surpassing its 20 % reduction target by 2020. These figures include emissions from international aviation, which are covered by EU targets but not accounted in national totals under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Agency's Briefing '[Trends and drivers in greenhouse gas emissions in the EU in 2016](#)', also published today, shows that the emission decrease in 2016 was mainly due to using less coal to produce heat and electricity. Greenhouse gas emissions from road transport increased for the third year in a row. Emissions in the residential and commercial sector also increased because the winter of 2016 was slightly colder than the winter of 2015.

Figure 3: GHG emissions by sector in the EU-28

EU greenhouse gas emissions have decreased since 1990 as a combined result of policies, economic factors and, on average, milder winters, the EEA analysis shows. The largest emission cuts have been made in the energy sector, due to energy efficiency improvements, an increased use of renewables and a less carbon intensive mix of fossil fuels – more gas, less coal and oil.

Although the 2016 developments are positive, there are already indications that EU greenhouse gas emissions increased in 2017, the EEA analysis warns. The EEA will publish preliminary estimates of 2017 emissions in the autumn.

Other key findings:

- The 0.4 % decrease in EU greenhouse gas emissions in 2016 occurred while the EU's gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 2.0 %. Emissions are expected to decrease further as GDP per capita increases, showing that a growing economy and addressing climate change can go hand in hand.
- The United Kingdom and Spain accounted for the largest decreases in GHG emissions in absolute terms in the EU in 2016. Reductions in those countries were largely because of lower consumption of solid fuels (mainly coal) in the power sector.
- There was a relatively large increase in emissions in Poland, particularly in the road transport sector.
- Emissions covered by the EU emissions trading system (ETS) decreased in

2016, in particular for the energy supply sector (mostly electricity and heat production) and the industry sector (mostly iron and steel). The decrease in the power sector was the result of a sharp decline in coal consumption.

- Based on Eurostat data, there was a decline in nuclear electricity generation. This was more than offset by the increase in the use of renewable energy sources.
- Compared with 1990, the EU economy uses less energy, and does so more efficiently, and with lower greenhouse gas emissions. Improved energy efficiency will continue to play a key role in cutting future emissions but further efforts will also be needed to achieve the EU's joint 40 % reduction target by 2030.