Press release

EU is off track to emissions targets as clean energy investments are trumped by fossil fuel imports

HELSINKI, 29 January 2026 - In the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the European Union (EU) has scrambled to reduce Russian fossil fuel imports and ensure energy security, but slow progress on electrifying transport and heating, and insufficient investment in new clean power generation, have kept the bloc reliant on fossil fuels and seen emission reductions lag behind targets for the second year in a row.

Today, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) released its annual analysis of EU CO2 emissions and fossil fuel imports that revealed that emissions fell by only 0.8% in 2025 and clean energy investments have fallen behind fossil fuel imports, with the United States now the largest supplier of fossil fuels to the EU for the first time.

In 2025, the U.S. provided 19% of the EU's total fossil fuel imports, a 7% year-on-year increase driven by rising LNG exports, and the average EU citizen spent EUR 150 on imports from the U.S., calling into question the bloc's commitment to energy security as it shifts away from Russian fossil fuel imports to the U.S., and clean energy investments come up short. The EU's overall fossil fuel imports in 2025 came to approximately EUR 880 per citizen for a total of EUR 396 bn, versus EUR 330 bn spent on clean energy.

To meet 2030 energy and emission targets, the EU's deployment of key clean energy technologies, including solar, wind, EVs and heat pumps must increase. In 2025, wind saw an increase of 16.5 gigawatts (GW), versus the 25 GW per year needed to meet the EU's energy security and climate goals, and although solar power generation growth exceeded the required rate in 2025, solar saw its first annual contraction since 2016. Progress now requires commitment to streamlined permitting, management of grid bottlenecks, electrification, and investment in energy storage, the lack of which point to ineffective policies to-date.

Lagging progress on clean energy and clean transportation has harmed the EU's energy security: deploying wind power and cleaning up transportation in line with the bloc's 2030 targets would have reduced both oil and gas consumption by more than the total imports from Russia in 2025. In other words, all of the oil and gas imported from Russia was used to cover the shortfall to these targets.

Slow and delayed progress in cleaner transportation is threatening the EU's 2030 climate and energy goals. Recent years have seen increases in transportation emissions from rising transport oil consumption push the EU's total emissions off track by 4%. Not only are the bloc's 2030 targets at risk but the countries lobbying hardest to drop a combustion-engine vehicle ban — Germany and

Italy — have also been hit hardest by the economic and health impacts of the emissions, which will cost upwards of EUR 500 billion and lead to some 100 thousand deaths per year from 2009 to 2040, according to CREA's estimates.

2025 EU CO2 emissions by sector

In 2025, the EU's CO2 emissions were unchanged in transportation (-0.1%), fell 2.1% in power generation and 3.2% in industry, and increased 5.5% in gas-fired heating. Cold weather and poor conditions for hydropower and wind power contributed to an increase in heating and lower reduction in power sector emissions.

2025 EU CO2 emissions fluctuations by country

Finland saw the greatest reductions in emissions at -6%, followed by Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden at -2%. Bulgaria had the greatest increase +6%, followed by Spain +3%, Portugal and Czechia at +2%, and Belgium at +1%. In absolute terms, the largest emissions reductions were in Germany, Poland, and the Netherlands, and the largest increases were in Spain, Bulgaria, and Italy.

Policy recommendations

- Remove barriers to economically attractive clean energy investments.
- Pave the way for energy storage, in particular removing barriers to deployment and ensuring that energy storage can compete on a level playing field with incumbent technologies to provide grid flexibility and stability.
- Accelerate electrification in transport, heating and industry.
- Close loopholes in the sanctions and end imports of Russian fossil fuels, notably ending Hungary and Slovakia's unnecessary imports of Russian crude via the Druzhba pipeline.
- Prevent the re-exportation and relabelling of Russian refined fuels from storage terminals such as those in Turkey.
- Clearly define, or remove, the 'emergency' clause in the REPowerEU regulation so that gas market tightness can't be used as a pretext to reintroduce Russian gas.

'*The EU urgently needs to speed up the transition to clean, secure energy sources, and kick the dependence on fossil fuel imports. The good news is that those solutions are economically competitive and the main thing governments need to do is get out of the way: cut red tape and artificial barriers so the engineers and construction workers can get to work*', said Lauri Myllyvirta, Lead Analyst at CREA.

'*Over the past four years, we have seen that it is possible to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Yet replacing the EU's imports of Russian fossil fuels with supply from elsewhere creates further vulnerabilities. The EU's economic growth and energy security require urgent concerted efforts on electrification and clean energy supply in the bloc — EU policies that accelerate the clean energy*

transition. It is shocking that in 2025, the EU still spent billions of euros more on fossil fuel imports than on clean energy investments', emphasised Isaac Levi, Europe-Russia Policy & Energy Analysis Team Lead at CREA.

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Notes to editors

The report related to this press release can be found here.
All CREA publications can be found here:
energyandcleanair.org/publications

About CREA

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) is an independent research organisation focused on revealing the trends, causes, and health impacts, as well as the solutions, to air pollution. CREA was founded in December 2019 in Helsinki and has staff in several Asian and European countries. The organisation's work is funded through philanthropic grants and revenue from commissioned research.

www.energyandcleanair.org

About the data

CO2 emissions

The CREA CO2 emission tracker builds on fossil fuel consumption from EUROSTAT's Supply, Transformation, and Consumption data and then applies IPCC emission factors to estimate associated CO2 emissions.

This data comes in with a lag of several months. We are able to track emissions in near-real time by filling in the most recent periods using daily power generation and gas consumption data from ENTSO-E and ENTSOG. Missing data is filled in by using various proxy datasets (e.g. ENTSOG, AGSI, ENTSOE, EMBER, industrial production) and/or ad-hoc heuristics.

The CREA CO2 Tracker covers CO2 emissions resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels. It does not include industrial process emissions that are not stemming from fossil fuels, nor does it include agricultural emissions or emissions related to land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF). Unless otherwise stated, emissions from international aviation and international maritime transport are excluded from the analysis.

Fossil fuel trade

The data on the EU's fossil fuel imports in this report is built on the Russia Fossil Tracker, a project led by CREA to highlight Russia's fossil fuel revenues that enable their invasion of Ukraine.

To gather information about fossil fuel flows for different commodities, we use a variety of data sources that differ depending on commodity type, transport type, and location.

The full methodology can be found in the report.