

Press release

EU CO₂ emissions fell 2% in first half of 2026, but 3.6% needed to meet EU 2030 climate target

Hormuz crisis cuts EU oil emissions in the first half of 2026, but power sector emissions rise for a second consecutive year, with coal-reliant Poland's emissions surging 8.1%

HELSINKI, 30 September 2026 – The European Union's 2030 climate targets are fast approaching, and the series of [heatwaves in the summer of 2026 that left upwards of 36,000 Europeans dead](#) serves as a stark reminder that there is no time to lose to get on track. Despite clear warning signs, the EU remains off track to meet its emissions targets. Poland, where [heat records were broken in June](#), recorded the largest year-on-year increase in CO₂ emissions in H1 2026.

CREA's latest EU CO₂ emissions report published today reveals that in the first half of 2026 (H1 2026, January to June), EU CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels fell by 20.9 million tonnes (Mt), which is 2% less than the same period in 2025. EU CO₂ emissions fell at just under half the pace needed to meet the EU's [2030 climate target](#). Emissions in H1 2026 were 17 million tonnes above the required pathway. At the current pace, the EU would only reach its 2030 emissions-reduction target by 2034.

CREA's new analysis finds that emissions from oil used in EU industry and buildings fell 10.8% year-on-year in H1 2026, accounting for three-fifths of the EU's total emissions reduction. Almost all of that fall came between March and June, after the [Hormuz crisis restricted supply and pushed up fuel prices](#), while industrial output remained broadly flat. CREA's analysis of the 2022 price spike suggests some of this drop in oil emissions could reverse as prices ease and buyers refill their tanks in future months.

Gas was the only fossil fuel whose emissions rose in the EU in H1 2026 year-on-year, increasing by 3.1 Mt (0.9%). Emissions from oil fell by 21.0 Mt (4.3%), while coal emissions fell by 3.1 Mt (1.3%).

Sectoral analysis showed that power was the only sector in which EU emissions rose in H1 2026, up 4.5 Mt (2%), marking the second consecutive increase in the first half of the year. Wind and solar generated a record 458 terawatt-hours (TWh), exceeding coal and gas power generation combined

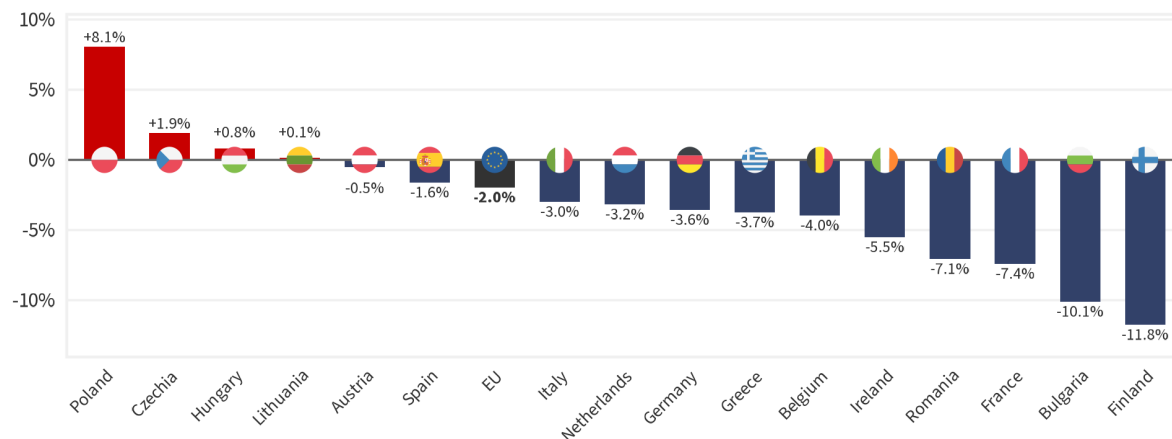
for the third consecutive first half of the year. Changes in heating and cooling needs accounted for almost all of the 2.9% rise in EU power generation.

‘Wind and solar kept a lid on Europe’s power emissions. Had coal and gas supplied the extra electricity that wind and solar generated in the first half of 2026 compared with a year earlier, the rise in the EU’s power sector emissions would have been six times greater. Even so, the EU is cutting emissions at only just under half the pace needed to meet its 2030 target, and renewable generation remained 13% below the EU’s Fit for 55 pathway in the first half of 2026,’ said Luke Wickenden, Energy Analyst at CREA and the report’s lead author.

EU transport emissions fell 2% in H1 2026, their fourth consecutive first-half decline. Diesel led the drop: deliveries fell 3.4% to their lowest January–June level since 2020, while petrol deliveries rose 1.0%. The trend began before the Hormuz crisis, with diesel deliveries already down 4.0% in January and February. The fall deepened as diesel prices surged in April and May, then reversed in June. Germany and France saw the largest cuts in transport emissions, while Spain and Austria recorded increases. [Lower light-vehicle mileage](#) and growing electric car sales also helped reduce transport emissions.

Change in CO2 emissions by member state

First half (January to June) of 2026 compared with the first half of 2025 | %



Source: CREA analysis based on Eurostat, ENTSO-E, ENTSOG, and IPCC.

Note: Shows member states whose estimates meet CREA’s quality thresholds, excluding Sweden; see Methodology. Figures for 2026 include estimated months.

CREA’s new analysis identifies Poland as the country with the largest increase in H1 2026 CO2 emissions, up 8.1%, largely due to rising power generation from hard coal, with domestic coal prices for Polish power plants reaching their lowest level in four years in March.

Finland recorded the EU’s steepest emissions fall in H1 2026, down 11.8%, despite electricity demand rising 6.3% during a cold start to the year. Nuclear generation increased while coal, oil and gas use fell. Bulgaria’s emissions fell 10.1% as hydropower recovered and coal generation fell,

though the decline only partially offset a sharp rise in H1 2025. Germany and France recorded the largest reductions in absolute terms, at 9.1 Mt and 8.6 Mt, respectively, largely due to lower fossil fuel use in industry, buildings and transport.

‘The fuel price shock drove most of the fall in EU CO2 emissions in the first half of 2026. Even with the Hormuz energy crisis cutting oil demand, the EU is on track to miss its 2030 target by four years at the current rate of progress. The EU must urgently expand wind and solar power, upgrade electricity grids, and replace fossil-fuel heating and vehicles. The EU must do more than firefight this crisis and wait for fossil fuel prices to come down, and instead make the lasting changes that drive the clean energy transition. Countries that move fastest will enhance energy security, lower bills and gain independence from petrodictatorships whose fossil fuels finance war and suffering,’ added Wickenden.

CREA calls on policymakers to keep carbon pricing under the EU’s Emissions Trading System strong and predictable, while implementing measures that accelerate the deployment of wind, solar, batteries, and grid connectivity, and to electrify all sectors, including transport. Doing so would help ensure that the temporary fall in oil use caused by the Hormuz crisis represents a lasting change.

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Notes to editors

The report related to this press release is available [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.

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About the methodology

Emissions are estimated with CREA's EU CO₂ emissions tracker, which applies IPCC emission factors to the fossil fuel use recorded in [Eurostat's monthly energy statistics](#). The estimates cover CO₂ from fossil fuel combustion in power generation, industry and buildings, and domestic transport. The estimates exclude international aviation and shipping, industrial process emissions, and land use. Emissions are counted when fuel is delivered to the market, which, for oil, can differ from when it is burned.

In this report, comparisons between years use the first half of each year (January to June). Comparing the same months avoids introducing additional seasonal differences that would arise, for example, from comparing the first half of a year with the second half of the previous year. Although we adjust some estimates for weather, those adjustments may not capture all seasonal effects, so comparing like-for-like periods provides a fairer basis for assessing year-on-year changes.

National emissions results are shown only for member states whose tracker estimates closely reproduce year-on-year changes in the Global Carbon Budget for 2020 to 2024, with a correlation of at least 0.9 and an average error of no more than three percentage points. Seventeen member states meet both thresholds, but Sweden is not shown because its solid fuel data for January to May 2026 are missing from Eurostat's monthly statistics. Five further member states pass the average-error test but have too few comparable years for the correlation test to be applied, so they are not shown either. The EU total is estimated separately, so national figures do not add up to the EU total.

In analysing the stability of CREA's CO₂ estimates, the analysis found that all five of its September estimates for H1 EU CO₂ emissions were within 1% of later figures, with a median revision of 0.39%.

The analysis can be seen [here](#). The tracker's methods are described in its [methodology document](#), and its latest estimates are available on [CREA's EU CO2 emissions tracker](#).