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IMPLEMENTING CLIMATE AMBITION IN 2023:

LINKING EU AND NATIONAL LEVEL CLIMATE ADVOCACY

2023 is a crucial year for national climate plan making under the EU climate action framework. This short explainer outlines the timings of key EU processes, what the processes entail and opens a discussion about what national partners can do to influence their governments at these crucial moments.

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Implementing climate ambition in 2023: Linking EU and national level climate advocacy

Introduction

2023 is a crucial year for national climate plan making under the EU climate action framework. By linking advocacy efforts at national level to key EU level climate 'ratchet' moments which will occur throughout this year, national climate advocacy actors can: (1) assess how their country is performing relative to other EU member states; (2) assess how serious their national government is about meeting national and EU targets; (3) identify gaps in national climate planning; (4) use these moments as levers to push for higher national ambition and (5) use EU processes to hold their governments to account if they are failing - particularly with regard to implementation of climate plans. In addition, national actors can help influence at EU level by persuading progressive countries to influence the next EU policy cycle and by pushing for EU delivery on its COP27 commitment to open a new era of transparency and accountability on net zero.

There are a number of key processes which offer advocacy opportunities throughout 2023: reacting to the advice/publications of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC); reacting to member states' first National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) 'Biennial Progress Report' (BPR) in March; feeding into the required revision of NECPs as the draft revisions are submitted to the Commission in June 2022; and responding to advocacy moments surrounding the policy consistency work of the EU Commission in the second half of the year. The key policy processes happening in 2023 will also lead up to other important moments in 2024, including pushing for Member States to take up the invitation to refresh their nLTS in 2024/25 rather than wait until 2030 to reflect this need for higher ambition, the revision of the EU Climate Law, the re-opening of the Governance Regulation and the European Parliament elections.

NGOs and think tanks operating across the EU have been preparing research and resources to support national partners to help draw attention to and participate in advocacy around these processes. This short explainer outlines the timing of these processes, what the processes entail and opens a discussion about what national partners can do to influence their governments at these crucial moments.








By collaborating on resources and strategies, national partners can push for their governments to take ownership of climate planning, and these efforts will ultimately decide whether member states and the EU as a whole will meet their climate targets.

Timeline








KEY EU POLICY & ADVOCACY MOMENTS 2023-25










Engaging the advice from the European Scientific Advisory Board (ESABCC) on Climate Change

	<p>Key Dates</p> <p>Throughout the year. The ESABCC's detailed work programme for 2023 is available here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 2023: the ESABCC will input on the 2040 climate target and the greenhouse gas emissions budget. - By June 2023: the ESABCC will input on the EU policy consistency assessment.
	<p>Legal Driver</p> <p>Articles 3 and 10 EU Climate Law.</p>
	<p>Requirements</p> <p>The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change provides independent scientific advice and produces reports on EU measures, climate targets and indicative greenhouse gas budgets and their consistency with the European Climate Law and the EU's international commitments under the Paris Agreement.</p>
	<p>Significance</p> <p>2023 kicks off first major steps by this new EU body to articulate its independent expert voice, creating several hooks for shaping more transparent decision-making about the next EU cycle and priorities going forward.</p>
	<p>Key players</p> <p>Mainly the ESABCC 'speaking' to the EU Commission, but the advice is published so an opportunity to push the EU Commission to explain its reactions and to convince European Parliament and Member States to take into account the views of the ESABCC.</p>
	<p>Advocacy Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESABCC advice could help set EU Commission expectations about what the progress and policy consistency assessments should look like and its proposals for EU 2040 target and greenhouse gas budget. • ESABCC advice could help push the EU Commission to provide a public justification for political choices and could help provide full transparency on preparations for crucial implementation and ratchet moments. • ESABCC advice is a hook to engage with MEPs and political parties about what experts are saying about priorities for next cycle of European Green Deal, and it may influence manifestos and for the political priorities of the new European Commission. • ESABCC may also create opportunities to showcase in Brussels and Member States the value of independent expert advisory bodies in supporting transparency about the available policy options & fostering leadership.
	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is detailed info on the ESABCC available on its website. • Ecologic facilitated a conference in November 2022, 'Charting a Path Towards EU Climate Neutrality in Turbulent Times', including an address from Ottmar Edenhofer, chair of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change.








National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) Biennial Progress Reports (BPR)

	<p>Key Dates 15 March 2023: Member States must submit their first 'Biennial Progress Reports', where Member States take stock of implementation progress towards meeting their 2030 targets.</p>
	<p>Legal Driver Article 17(1) of the EU Governance Regulation creates a rolling biennial process of implementation reports starting 15/03/23 (as amended by Art 10 EU Climate Law).</p>
	<p>Requirements BPRs must provide info on: progress towards reaching national contributions to the EU's climate and energy objectives across all sectors; policies and measures adopted to meet those targets/objectives; financing and implementing of policies and measures (including a review of actual investment vs. initial investment assumptions); policies and measures to meet objectives on research/development/competitiveness; progress establishing Multilevel climate & energy dialogue; and adaptation/impact of NECP policies and measures on air quality/emission of air pollutants.</p>
	<p>Significance A major accountability moment on achievement of climate targets and of the European Green Deal. This is the first national report of progress in implementing NECPs (i.e. updated EU 2030 targets) since the Governance Regulation was adopted. BPRs can be a lever for national level advocacy on transparency, accountability, and real-world progress to EU 2030 & 2050 targets.</p>
	<p>Key players The BPR primarily involves an exchange between the national governments and the EU Commission. It will require pressure, campaigning and possibly access to information requests to make Member States publish BPRs.</p>
	<p>Advocacy Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU seriousness about its COP27 commitment to focus on implementation and the strength of the EU's mechanism for monitoring of national implementation. • Gaps that need to be filled as member states consider how to revise their NECPs and Member state policy consistency with net zero. • Scale of bilateral and regional co-operation between member states on energy security (i.e. renewable energy) will provide another indication of EU solidarity on European Green Deal. • Action on Member States' Multilevel Energy and Climate Dialogue 'or its equivalent', creating advocacy hook on public participation for the NECP revision.
	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For an overview of EU reporting requirements on Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, see here. • Duwe, Matthias, Deyana Spasova (2021): Measuring progress towards climate neutrality. Part II: Integrating net zero indicators in EU governance processes, Ecologic Institute, Berlin / IDDRI, Paris. Available here. • CAN-E NECP Tracker, available here.







Revision of National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)

	<p>Key Dates 30 June 2023: MS must submit draft revisions of NECPs to the European Commission; (finalised versions must be submitted by 30th June 2024). This is a critical moment to push the EU 27 to implement FF55 and COP27 commitments.</p>
	<p>Legal Driver Article 14 of the Governance Regulation requires member states to submit a draft 'update' of their NECP by 30 June. Although it is unlikely that any Member State could justify that they don't need to revise their NECP given the increase of the targets and the ongoing energy crisis, there is a real possibility that (again) EU countries may submit late and fail to meet the 30th June deadline.</p>
	<p>Requirements The EU Commission has published its guidance for member states for the revision of the NECPs. Overall, the document clearly frames the NECPs as strategic planning tools - instrumental to accelerate the implementation of the EU Green Deal and there is an explicit expectation that the upcoming NECPs should be more ambitious (climate and energy).</p>
	<p>Significance NECPs are economy-wide and drive accountability and solidarity on Fit for 55/RePowerEU implementation, and transparency on Member State policy consistency for net zero. June 2023 – June 2024 is the last NECP revision cycle for achieving the 2030 targets. It is a defining opportunity to demonstrate EU solidarity on implementing Fit for 55 and holding the EU to account for delivering on its COP27 commitment to implementation and accountability on net zero.</p>
	<p>Key players The NECP revision will primarily involve an exchange between MS and EU COM exchange. But – the public should be consulted on the key political decisions taken in the draft and final plans. Draft NECP revisions will be published.</p>
	<p>Advocacy Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-setting Member State 2030 ambition – they must set out pledges for achieving the new climate and energy targets and concrete policies at national level to implement them in all sectors, especially in light of their increased ESR targets. • Seriousness about public participation (process and outcome) – Member States' review must summarise public views, enabling tracking of uptake of those views/seriousness on social policies to mitigate backlash; and build public confidence in the idea that a fair transition is possible and can solve cost of living crisis. • Credible financial policies and actual investment without which delivery of net zero is at serious risk and action to mitigate environmental impacts of implementing energy and climate policies required by Governance Regulation. • Stronger mainstreaming of climate in EU Semester if revision shows weak compliance by MS with European Semester Recommendations. • Creating data sets and advocacy around inconsistent national policies - assessments of the extent to which NECPs and proposed national measures are consistent with net zero; pushing for a parallel update of all nLTS in the 'refresh' window in 2024/25 to restore required 'consistency' between NECP and nLTS. • In June 2024 the finalized NECPs offers further advocacy opportunities around: Raising issues around EU seriousness about net zero, 1.5C and compliance with COP27 commitments on implementation; transparency about the credibility of the EU COM's 2023 assessment of MS policy consistency and EU progress to net zero; the finalized review cycle also creates a further hook to push for MS review of national Long Term Strategy by 2025.
	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIFE Unify (2022), "Taking Stock & Planning Ahead: National Energy and Climate Plans as a tool to achieve climate safety and energy security", Available here. • EU Commission Guidance on NECP revision, available here. • CAN Europe have published a qualitative tool to assess NECPs, available here.








European Commission policy consistency assessment

	<p>Key Dates By 30 September 2023 the EU Commission must complete its first (5-yearly) assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU policy consistency with net zero and adaptation objectives (Art 6(2) EU Climate Law). • EU (i.e. Member State collective) progress towards net zero and adaptation objectives (Art 6(1) EU Climate Law). • Member State national policy consistency with EU's net zero and adaptation objectives (based on NECP, Biennial Report, nLTS) (Art 7(1) EU Climate Law).
	<p>Legal Driver Arts 6 & 7 EU Climate Law, see above for relevant articles.</p>
	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If EU policy inconsistencies are identified, the Commission must 'take the necessary measures' – but no deadline for these is set. • If member state policy inconsistency identified – the Commission 'may' publish country-specific Recommendations. Member States have 6 months to notify the EU Commission how they intend to respond.
	<p>Significance These assessments won't happen again until 2028 so 2023 is a big moment for the EU to demonstrate that its accountability systems are strong enough to drive implementation towards net zero.</p>
	<p>Key players EU COM speaking directly to the European Parliament and Council, but assessments and review may be based on ESABCC advice and reports.</p>
	<p>Advocacy Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2023 policy consistency report is a crucial opportunity for advocacy around the state of European Green Deal implementation, the speed of the EU transition to net zero and policy priorities for the next EU cycle. • Key opportunity to trigger the EU Commission's 'course correction' duties, including the scope of the remedial measures and to clarify the timeline for remedial proposals. • This is also a crucial moment for the EU to signal seriousness about its COP27 commitments to prioritise accountability and implementation towards net zero.
	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law'). • Matthias Duwe (2022) 'Making EU climate governance fit for net zero' Ecologic Scientific Opinion Paper, available here.

Important Commission reports and legislative proposals

	<p>Key Dates By May 2024, i.e. within 6 months of Paris Agreement global stocktake (spanning COP26-28) the Commission is scheduled to publish a series of important proposals and reports for shaping ambition post-2030. While the European Green Deal applies in theory up to climate neutrality, it is not clear what follow-up the Commission will propose to it following the European elections.</p>
	<p>Legal Drivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Commission State of the Energy Union Report, Art. 35 of the Governance Regulation. • Commission report on the projected indicative post 2030 EU GHG budget including its underlying methodology (Art 4(4) EU Climate Law). • Legislative proposal to amend the EU Climate Law to set an EU 2040 target (Art 4(3) EU Climate Law). (NB: exact timing for the legislative proposal not clear yet). • Legislative proposal to amend the Governance Regulation (art. 45 of the Governance Regulation).
	<p>Significance This is a crucial moment for strengthening the climate governance rules applying post-2030 and ensuring that the bulk of remaining emissions is reduced in the early 2030s rather than at the end of the decade.</p>
	<p>Key players The Commission's proposals and reports are directed at the European Parliament and Council, but they are published and legislative processes entail public engagement. Proposals/reports must 'consider' ESABCC advice and reports and the outcome of the global stocktake.</p>
	<p>Advocacy Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This series of Commission proposals and reports create key hooks for debate (and the adoption of meaningful and binding rules) around post-2030 EU ambition, connecting directly to priorities for the next phase of policy making to meet the net zero objective. • Crucial hook to push for an updated EU Long Term Strategy, especially through the revision of the Governance Regulation, and for EU member states to submit revised national LTS (or for some countries, submit one for the first time).
	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action • For information on the global stocktake, see here. • For previous EU State of the Energy Union Reports, see here.

National Long Term Strategy (nLTS)

	<p>Key Dates Member states should, “where necessary” submit an update of their 2020 national Long Term Strategy (nLTS) by 1 Jan 2025.</p>
	<p>Legal Driver Article 15 of the Governance Regulation requires Member States to prepare and submit to the Commission a long-term strategy with a perspective of at least 30 years by 1 January 2020, and subsequently by 1 January 2029.</p>
	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 15(1) of the Governance Regulation requires member states to ‘update’ their nLTS every 5 years ‘where necessary’. Given the increased 2030 climate target and the update of NECPs, there is an overwhelming argument that the update is indeed necessary. • Article 15(6) states that NECPs must be ‘consistent’ with nLTS.
	<p>Significance Updated nLTS will shed light on when the EU is on track to achieve the Union’s net zero objective and create hook, especially at the national level, to push for course correction measures in next EU cycle. Ideally, updated nLTS should contain a scenario/target for climate neutrality at national level and a breakdown of how this target may be achieved (including with a break-down of emissions reduction vs removal by sinks).</p>
	<p>Key players Primarily member states and EU Commission but European Parliament may also draw attention. The ESABCC should be engaged on for the elaboration of the EU Long Term Strategy.</p>
	<p>Advocacy Opportunities Advocacy opportunity to renew the push for seriousness about implementation towards net zero – are Member States’ modelling credible whole-economy pathways for achieving net zero at national level?</p>
	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAN Europe, (2021), “Qualitative tool to assess nLTS”, available here. • Ecologic (2022) ‘Technical Report: Charting a path to net zero’, available here. • WWF (2022), map of national climate neutrality targets in EU Member States, available here.