

Energy saving and emission reduction

520 kWh

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Ambitious energy efficiency targets are key to driving Europe's energy transition. By using energy more efficiently, and thereby consuming less, Europeans can lower their energy bills, help protect the environment, mitigate climate change, improve their quality of life, reduce the EU's reliance on external suppliers of oil and gas and support the sustainable growth of the EU economy. To unlock these benefits, energy efficiency needs to be improved across the entire energy supply chain, from production to final consumption.

EU energy efficiency measures focus on policy areas with the greatest potential for energy savings and where a harmonised approach across EU countries is needed. This includes industry, the public sector, the construction and renovation of buildings, the transport and energy supply sectors and the introduction of a uniform energy labelling system.

On 25 July 2023, the EU officially concluded the legislative process to strengthen the Energy Efficiency Directive. The updated legislation, including the new binding target, entered into force in all EU countries on 10 October 2023.

This target sets the goal of reducing EU final energy consumption by 11.7% by 2030, compared to the projected energy use for 2030 (based on the 2020 reference scenario). It translates into a primary energy consumption target of 992.5 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe) and a final energy consumption target of 763 Mtoe by 2030.

Compared to the previous targets (1128 Mtoe for primary energy and 846 Mtoe for final energy), the increased targets aim to reduce Europe's 2030 energy use by roughly the equivalent of Spain's current annual energy consumption.

This new target highlights the EU's increased ambition on energy efficiency, surpassing the 9% target proposed by the Commission in July 2021, as part of the "Fit for 55" package and going even further beyond the existing 2030 target set in 2018.

Under the revised directive, and as part of their energy efficiency obligation schemes, EU countries will be required to achieve an average annual energy savings rate of 1.49% from 2024 to 2030, up from the 2021-2023 requirement of 0.8%, driving energy savings in critical sectors like buildings, industry, and transport.

In addition, to underline the exemplary role to be played by the public sector, there is a new annual energy consumption reduction target of 1.9% for the public sector as a whole and the annual 3% buildings renovation obligation is being extended to all levels of public administration.

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In the context of the REPowerEU plan, energy efficiency was indicated as one of the most effective and sustainable ways for the EU to discontinue its reliance on Russian fossil fuel imports. Therefore, in May 2022, the Commission proposed further increasing the binding EU energy efficiency targets from 9% to 13% compared to the 2020 Reference Scenario (750 Mtoe in final and 980 Mtoe in primary energy consumption, respectively).

Between 2007 and 2014, there was a gradual decrease in energy consumption. However, between 2014 and 2017, we saw an increase that could partly be attributed to good economic performance, with low oil prices and colder winters. In 2018, this growing trend stabilised and primary energy consumption even declined compared to 2017.

The COVID-19 crisis significantly affected the EU economy and led to a decrease in energy consumption in 2020. The Eurostat data for 2020 reveals that primary energy consumption in the EU dropped to 1,236 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe), while final energy consumption decreased to 907 Mtoe. These figures represented a 5.8% and 5.4% decline, respectively, below the EU 2020 target level.

The Commission published a report on the achievement of the 2020 energy efficiency targets in November 2022. The analysis combines the information provided by EU countries in their reports with reliable data from Eurostat.

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