

The EU's Stakeholder Consultation on Action on Climate Change: Summary for Policymakers

The views here represented are those of the submissions to the Commission's online consultation and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Commission.

An online consultation took place in October and November 2004 in order to gain stakeholder input into EU policy on climate change post-2012. A summary of the most commonly expressed views by different groups of stakeholders is given below. The full submissions can be found online at: http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/action_climat/library

Academia

It was felt that the EU should act to promote future action against climate change, both through promoting international cooperation and through leading by example. However, unilateral action was agreed to be insufficient to solve the climate problem.

The 2°C target was seen by some as an acceptable target and a framework for the required long term goals that will allow strategic industrial planning. It was argued that developing country participation should be encouraged through adaptation support and through transfer of sustainable technologies, but doubts were raised about their willingness to participate without US leadership in emission reductions.

Further research and development is needed into new technologies, but efforts should be made on improving efficiency and reducing the demand side for energy. Carbon capture and storage was felt to be acceptable by several contributors.

Contraction and convergence had its advocates and no views were expressed against maintenance of the fundamental Kyoto architecture; there were calls for the CDM be made bureaucratic and complex. A Coalition of the Willing was suggested as a forum for countries willing to act more stringently than in this framework. However, removal of market barriers in the fields of energy, electricity and transportation was felt to be more important than politically negotiated targets by some contributors.

The wide range of views expressed, and the detail in which they were argued, makes comprehensiveness difficult in a brief overview.

Industry

Although there was general agreement that the EU should maintain its leadership on climate change policy, this was expressed, almost universally, with caveats: the mitigation effort should be global and the EU should not act unilaterally. Developing countries were invited to take on appropriate differentiated commitments. The scientific validity of the EU's 2°C target was questioned by a number of stakeholders.

The three pillars of sustainable development were quoted in support of the need to have economically sustainable, market orientated, policies. The need for consistency with the Lisbon Agenda was raised by a number of stakeholders. It was widely agreed that emissions reductions should be market-orientated and that the flexibility mechanisms of Kyoto were important or essential. The need for longer timeframes in policies to allow greater surety in long-term planning was a widely-held view. Benchmarking, rather than emissions caps, also had its advocates.

It was expressed that all technologies should be considered and their adoption should come from the bottom up. However, the calls for carbon capture and storage were explicit from the energy industry, but “green” industries expressed doubts about the necessity of using this technology if other measures were put in place. Nuclear was also more enthusiastically promoted by some sectors than others, while some, notably paper, were sequestration enthusiasts. The need for greater coordination and prioritization of research and development efforts was expressed. It was held that all sectors should be included in an emission reduction strategy, and that consumers need to be educated to manage the demand side.

On costs and benefits of adaptation and mitigation, the difficulty in producing figures was noted and the need for more research in this area was argued.

NGOs

The EU must provide leadership both politically and through domestic action. Reengaging the US with the climate process should be a priority. A staged approach for developing countries was advocated, with the need for financial support highlighted.

The 2°C target was generally welcomed as a peak temperature increase, although there were calls to reduce temperatures beyond this peak. The concentrations of GHGs required to achieve the goal were subject to disagreement, although all lay between 400-500ppmv CO₂ equivalent. The need for defined targets was generally agreed with some suggesting different targets for fossil fuel and LULUCF emissions.

Renewables were widely held to be the only long term option and there were calls for binding targets for their uptake and the removal of subsidies for competing technologies, such as nuclear and fossil fuels. Further R&D support for renewables was advocated by many. Energy efficiency measures were also favored. Nuclear was dismissed as unacceptable on security and waste grounds. Sinks were also strongly disfavored. There were calls to ban fluorinated gases and to tackle emissions from the aviation industry.

The competitive advantage of producing new technologies was highlighted as a benefit of action now, as was the likelihood of greater cost in acting later. The ancillary benefits on health and air pollution were proffered as additional reasons for early action.

Political Actors and Agencies

A broad range of views was expressed, leading to little overall coherence in viewpoint. However, a few areas of commonality arose.

It was felt that the EU should continue to show leadership, within a multilateral context. The need to address climate change over longer timeframes than at present was also raised. The UNFCCC framework was held to be the appropriate forum for future action, although there was a suggestion for informal parallel confidence building meetings. Several papers called for a precautionary approach to be taken; binding commitments were seen as one means of achieving this, while others called for sectoral targets applied in such a way as to avoid disadvantaging industry in the global marketplace. Cost effectiveness was regarded as an important consideration in deciding on which measures to adopt and flexibility was seen as a key way in which this could

be achieved. There were arguments made in favour of greater recognition being granted to adaptation measures.

There was general agreement on the need for a multilateral approach that includes both the big emitters, but also developing countries, although it was recognized that different types of participation are appropriate for different countries, particularly those at different stages of development. There were calls for more bottom up action and making use of regional political infrastructure. Nuclear had its proponents, as did renewable energy sources.

Private Individuals

A diversity of views was offered, with few points agreed generally. Several suggestions were received for taxing high-emission goods produced domestically and from nonparticipating countries. It was also mooted that the EU appoint a Business Continuity Commissioner to advise industry on adaptation and mitigation strategies.