News: Amid fierce criticism from environmental activists, the European Commission (EU’s executive arm) is unveiling plans for its first ever climate law — the basis of the European Union’s Green Deal aimed at making the 27-country bloc climate neutral by 2050.

Objective of the proposed law

With its proposals, the EU’s executive arm wants to make its ambition of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to zero by mid-century irreversible, and legally-binding for all member states.

About the draft law

According to a leaked draft of the proposals establishing the 2050 goal, the European Commission is proposing a mechanism for regularly raising the EU’s emissions reduction target over the next three decades.

Criticism

- However, there is no plan for an increase of the bloc’s overall emissions goal for 2030. This particular point has been harshly criticized by climate activists, who claim that delaying the upgraded 2030 target is detrimental to the bloc’s credibility in the fight against climate change.

- In the draft, the European Commission only said it would review the EU’s current target of a 40% greenhouse gas reduction by September and “explore options for a new 2030 target of 50% to 55% emission reductions compared with 1990 levels.”
Environmental group Greenpeace said that because of the absence of a 2030 goal, EU governments will “find it extremely difficult to agree a new target” before the U.N climate talks that will be held in Glasgow in November.

In an open letter signed by 34 youth climate activists, the group stressed that instead of setting long-term goals, the EU should focus on the “CO2 budget which applies for today.”

Such CO2 budgets are used to measure the additional emissions that can enter the atmosphere without global warming exceeding a certain level. World leaders agreed five years ago in Paris to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), ideally no more than 1.5 C (2.7 F) by the end of the century. But scientists say countries will miss both of those goals by a wide margin unless drastic steps are taken to begin cutting greenhouse gas emissions this year.

Greenpeace also insists a 55% reduction target for 2030 wouldn’t be sufficient to limit global heating to 2 degrees Celsius.

About European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives brought forward by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making Europe climate neutral in 2050.

An impact assessed plan will also be presented to increase the EU’s greenhouse gas emission reductions target for 2030 to at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels.

The plan is to review each existing law on its climate merits, and also introduce new legislation on the circular economy, building renovation, biodiversity, farming and innovation.

The plan includes potential carbon tariffs for countries that don’t curtail their greenhouse gas pollution at the same rate.
It also includes:

1. a **circular economy** action plan,

2. a **review and possible revision** (where needed) of the all relevant climate-related policy instruments, including the Emissions Trading System,

3. a **Farm to Fork strategy** along with a focus shift from compliance to performance (which will reward farmers for managing and storing carbon in the soil, improved nutrient management, reducing emissions, ...),

4. a **revision of the Energy Taxation Directive** which is looking closely at fossil fuel subsidies and tax exemptions (aviation, shipping),

5. a **sustainable and smart mobility strategy** and an EU forest strategy. The latter will have as its key objectives effective afforestation, and forest preservation and restoration in Europe.

It also leans on **Horizon Europe**, to play a pivotal role in leveraging national public and private investments. Through partnerships with industry and member States, it will support research and innovation on transport technologies, including batteries, clean hydrogen, low-carbon steel making, circular bio-based sectors and the built environment.

**About Horizon Europe**

- Horizon Europe is a planned 7-year European Union **scientific research initiative** meant to succeed the current Horizon 2020 program. The European Commission drafted and approved a plan for the Horizon Europe to raise EU science spending levels by 50% over the years 2021-2027.

- The proposal calls for **€100 billion in research and innovation** spending for years 2021-2027. Of that sum **€2.4 billion is earmarked for the Euratom nuclear research program** and **€3.6 billion is put away for an umbrella**
investment fund, called InvestEU. After accounting for 2% annual inflation, in 2018 euros the funding for Horizon Europe amounts to €86.6 billion.