



Carbon Dioxide Removal and the European Climate Law

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CDR in the European Green Deal

- One of the main goals of the new Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen is a European Green Deal that would put Europe on a path to climate neutrality by 2050
- The central element is a European Climate Law, which will set near-term targets and is currently the subject of heated debate
- Before the end of 2020, European leaders are expected to make two critical decisions: (i) the scale of the ambition for 2030 and (ii) whether there should be a single target that includes carbon dioxide removal (CDR) or whether there should be separate targets.
- CDR tends to be presented either as a source of flexibility or a 'watering down' of ambition, instead we argue that there should be greater focus on creating the evidence base for *sustainable* CDR that will allow for delivery of verifiable negative emissions at scale post-2030.



Current state of the debate

- Driven by its longer-term commitment to carbon neutrality, the EU has been focused on increasing the ambition of its 2030 target from the previously-agreed 40% target with little attention to the role that CDR might play
- The original proposal from the Commission was for a target of 55% that would include CDR
- On 6 October, the European Parliament supported a 60% target without CDR
- The European Council has recently agreed on a 55% target with CDR
- Those favouring greater stringency argue for separating out CO₂ removals since this would offer greater certainty that mitigation efforts will only focus on emissions reduction
- Those who support greater flexibility favour establishing a singular comprehensive target that includes CO₂ removals.
- Less attention has been given to what would happen to CDR if it were not included in the main target or how best to ensure that the 2030 efforts put the European Union on a sustainable path to its more important 2050 ambitions.

Looking forward

- One unambiguously positive amendment included by the Parliament was a proposal to create an independent scientific body, somewhat akin to the UK Committee on Climate Change, that would monitor progress and assess whether climate policy is consistent with the targets enacted.
- Such an independent ‘EU Climate Change Council’ would help establish a clearer basis for assessing the potential contribution from CDR.
- Including CDR in a single target would turn the focus to least-cost reductions and the most advanced options such as afforestation.
- The post-2030 pathway to carbon neutrality will depend on having spent this coming decade incentivised learning for many of these options.
- The 2020s can be used both to improve technology readiness, accounting methodologies, incentive structures and business models as well as gaining a better understanding relative national endowments and opportunities

Thanks

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