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Europe agrees energy targets for 2020

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Targets for 20 per cent of Europe's energy to come from renewable sources by 2020 were agreed after EU countries decided to reduce the role of biofuels over concerns about the impact of growing crops for fuel in developing countries.

In concessions to smooth the deal EU states that cannot afford to meet their own individual renewable energy targets will be able to outsource some of their efforts by sponsoring green projects in other countries or buying credits from those countries that have exceeded the goal.

Instead of a parallel target proposed last year for 10 per cent of transport fuel to come from biofuels, this goal will now include all methods of sustainable transport such as electric cars and trains, while aviation will be exempt, meeting concerns from Britain that fuel technology would not be ready in time.

Renewable energy targets are a major part of the EU's massive climate change package, due to be signed off by leaders from the 27 nations at a summit in Brussels later this week. Each country will have its own share of the overall goal, with Britain obliged to move to 15 per cent of renewable energy from 3 per cent this year — a target expected to mean that more than 30 per cent of electricity will have to come from renewable sources, with thousands more wind turbines needed.

Agreement on the renewable energy goals was held up by Italy which won a review of the package generally and the role of biofuels in particular in 2014. In another concession, EU countries that exceed their individual renewable target will be able to sell the premium to an EU member struggling to meet its own target.

But fierce wrangling is still going on over another key plank, the emissions trading scheme, with a group of eastern EU countries heavily dependent on coal power, led by Poland, arguing for big subsidies from western European nations.

Jose Manuel Barroso, the European Commission President, said that he hoped for a comprehensive deal including emission trading, which could then be extended to include North America. "If we reach agreement this week, we should propose a transatlantic emission market which should be the basis for a global carbon market," he said.

In Poznan, Poland, where UN climate talks are under way, green groups were broadly content with the EU deal on renewable energy but voiced alarm at another part of the 2020 climate package to be agreed at the Brussels summit, so-called effort sharing.

This sets energy use reduction targets for sectors, accounting for 55 per cent of EU emissions, that are not covered by trading in carbon emissions, including agriculture, transport and households.

A coalition of environmental groups called this a farce because polluters could offset as much as two-thirds of their emissions by investing in clean-technology projects in poor countries.

"This proposal, steered by the self-interest of EU member states, sets the bar far too low," said the coalition, called the [Climate Action Network](#).

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