

Press release

Council of Climate Change Experts confirms missed targets in the buildings and transport sectors

Berlin, 13.04.2022 – The Council of Climate Change Experts (ERK) today presented its second review report on the previous year's emissions data and submitted it to the Federal Government and the German Bundestag. In the report, prepared in accordance with Section 12 of the Federal Climate Change Act, the Council of Experts reviews and assesses the calculation of the previous year's greenhouse gas emissions broken down by seven sectors by the Federal Environment Agency on 15 March. In addition to the review, the Council of Experts classifies the development of emissions and the achievement or failure to achieve targets of individual sectors in depth and discusses the need and options for further development of the Federal Climate Change Act.

Examination of emissions data

The core of the report is the examination of the calculation of the previous year's emissions by the Federal Environment Agency. The Council of Experts has comprehensively as well as randomly reviewed the figures and finds no indication that the authority should have arrived at different results in its point value estimates. The reported emission values for the transport and building sectors were above the annual target values specified in the Federal Climate Change Act. According to Section 8 (1) of the Federal Climate Change Act, the ministries responsible for these sectors must consequently submit an immediate programme within three months that ensures compliance with the annual emission levels of the respective sector for the following years. For the other sectors mentioned in the Act, the emission levels were below the permissible annual levels.

Classification of the results

In 2021, total GHG emissions (excluding land use, land use change and forestry / LULUCF) increased by about 4.5% or 33 Mt CO₂ eq. compared to 2020, following a decrease of almost 9% in 2020. This year-on-year increase represents the largest percentage increase in greenhouse gas emissions since 1990. In addition to the renewed growth in economic output, the increase in emissions intensity, i.e. greenhouse gas emissions in relation to gross domestic product, observed for the first time since 2013, also contributed to this. With a view to achieving the medium- to long-term greenhouse gas reduction targets, the Council of Climate Change Experts therefore intends to examine in its report on the trend development of greenhouse gas emissions, scheduled for autumn 2022, the extent to which this increase in emission intensity, which has made a substantial contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions over the entire period since 1990, could prove critical.

Taking into account the special effects of the year 2021, which were mainly characterised by price, weather and storage effects as well as by the measures to contain the Covid 19 pandemic, the Council of Experts makes a more detailed classification for selected sectors. The findings are as follows: The building sector missed its sector target in 2021 for the second time in a row, whereby the special effects such as weather or storage of heating oil had a notable effect in total, but in the opposite direction. The transport sector missed

its sector target for the first time in 2021, despite the tendentially emission-reducing effects of rising fuel prices and measures to contain the Covid 19 pandemic.

“Our analysis gives indications that without the special effects, emissions in transport would have been rather higher in 2021,” explains Hans-Martin Henning, Chair of the Expert Council. “At the same time, we confirm that the building sector exceeded the annual target value for the second time in a row. However, it should be noted in this finding that the exceedance value is smaller than the influences caused by storage and weather.”

Further development of the Federal Climate Change Act

Against the background of this year’s audit, which was conducted for the second time, the panel sees the need for substantial further development of the Federal Climate Change Act. “The Climate Change Act is still quite young. In addition to fundamental issues, such as those relating to European embedding, the need for concrete adaptation in terms of monitoring and control is apparent in practice in a number of places,” explains Brigitte Knopf, Deputy Chair of Council of Experts on Climate Change. “The sector targets have an important function as a governance instrument for meeting climate protection targets, but additional or adapted steering signals are needed. Equally important would be a stronger alignment of the targets and sectoral governance with the overarching instruments of European and national emissions trading. In addition, the Climate Protection Act has so far lacked forward-looking steering in the event of anticipated target failure.” The Council of Experts on Climate Change recommends a coordinated process for the further development of the Federal Climate Change Act in the current year.

The Verification Report and the accompanying Technical Document are available here:

<https://expertenrat-klima.de/publikationen/>

The Council of Experts on Climate Change (ERK) is an independent panel of five experts from different disciplines. It is mandated by § 11 and § 12 of the Federal Climate Change Act (KSG) and its members are appointed by the Federal Government for a period of five years. The panel consists of the five members Prof. Dr. Hans-Martin Henning (Chair), Dr. Brigitte Knopf (Deputy Chair), Prof. Dr. Marc Oliver Bettzüge, Prof. Dr. Thomas Heimer and Dr. Barbara Schломann. In addition to other legally defined tasks, the Council of Experts on Climate Change reviews the emissions data of the Federal Environment Agency in accordance with Section 12 (1) KSG and submits an assessment of the published data to the Federal Government and the German Bundestag within one month.

Visit <https://expertenrat-klima.de> for more information on the Council of Experts on Climate Change and its publications. Follow us on Twitter: @ERK_Klima

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