

Facing Climate Change in the United States and the European Union: Comparing targets and objectives

Context:

The dynamics in favor of **greater commitment to the environment** and to the fight against the effects of climate change are accelerating **on both sides of the Atlantic**.

Climate change is a policy central to the **Biden/Harris Administration**, which has rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement and announced on Thursday, April 22, 2021, in its **Leaders Summit on Climate**, the new U.S. targets to tackle climate change, demonstrating a new ecological rebound.

The **European Union** is also leading the way in the fight against climate change with its **European Green Deal**, which puts forward an ambitious policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Prior to the Leaders' Summit, the European Union also announced more ambitious commitments in its fight against climate change.

In light of these recent developments and the centrality of these issues, **AmCham France proposes here a comparison of these new measures through three main prisms: carbon emissions targets, energy targets and waste / recycling targets.**

UNITED STATES	EUROPEAN UNION
CARBON EMISSIONS TARGETS <i>The US aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 50-52% by 2030 (base year 2005) while the EU has set a target of 55% (base year 1990). If we compare the absolute reduction of emissions using 2019 as the base year, the United States and the European Union have equivalent targets (42% reduction in carbon emissions between 2019 and 2030).</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States has set the goal to cut its emissions by 50%-52% from 2005 levels by 2030. • This target nearly doubles former President Barack Obama's pledge of an emissions cut of 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025. • Sector-specific goals will be laid out later in 2021. • The U.S. climate goal also marks an important milestone in Biden's broader plan to become carbon neutral by 2050 - An agenda he says can create millions of good-paying jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European Union committed to an intermediate target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% from 1990 levels by 2030. • This target is lower than the 60% goal sought by the European Parliament. But it replaces a previous goal of a cut of at least 40%, demonstrating increased ambition. • Brussels is aiming to go "carbon neutral" by 2050.

ENERGY TARGETS

In terms of energy, the United States is focusing on carbon-free energy (which includes nuclear power) while the European Union has rather focused on setting targets for renewable energy. In terms of renewable energy, while EU Member States set national goals as part of a common framework, the U.S has no federal guidelines on the matter, despite the fact that some federal states have committed to renewable energy targets.

- The United States has set a goal to reach **100% carbon pollution-free electricity by 2035.**
 - The U.S. is **set to invest \$400 billion over the upcoming 10 years in clean energy and innovation.**
 - It will also ban new oil and natural gas concessions on federal lands and offshore waters "to the extent possible."
 - However, **not all US States have concrete renewable energy targets.**
 - Today, **31 states**, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, representing nearly 220 million people (**over 65% of the U.S. population**) have a **Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)**. Out of these 31 states, 13 are targeting an energy portfolio comprised of more than 50% renewable electricity; out of which 6 are targeting 80% or more, and 4 – Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. – are striving for 100%.
- Currently, the EU aims to use **at least 32% renewable energy and improve its energy efficiency by at least 32.5% by 2030.**
 - Discussions are underway at the Commission to set a **new target of 35-40% renewable energy use by 2030.**
 - **All EU Member States now have a national energy policy that is part of the EU framework**, which contains, for instance, a national objective to develop renewables by 2030.

WASTE / RECYCLING TARGETS

While the European Union has a coordinated action plan and set targets since 2000, the U.S. set its first National Recycling Goal in 2020 and did not make further announcements on April 22nd. The European Union has separate strategies for household and industrial/public waste, while the United States does not distinguish between different waste types.

- On **November 17, 2020** at the America Recycles Summit, the Former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Andrew Wheeler, announced the **National Recycling Goal to increase the U.S. recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030.**
- The 2008 Waste Framework Directive introduces **recycling and recovery targets** to be achieved by 2020 for **household waste (50%) and construction and demolition waste (70%).**
 - In 2018, more ambitious targets were adopted for municipal waste. The EU is set to increase the level of preparation for reuse **and recycling of municipal waste** to 55% by 2025, to 60% by 2030 and to 65% by 2035.
 - The 1994 Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive sets that **by the end of 2030, at least 70% by weight of all packaging waste must be recycled.**
 - By 2022 at the latest, the European Commission should **introduce minimum quotas for the use of recycled content in**

	<p>new plastic products. Although these quotas are still being developed, industry experts expect them to be between 15 and 30 percent.</p>
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Sources:

- EUR-Lex : [1](#), [2](#).
- European Environment Agency: [1](#), [2](#).
- [Global Carbon Atlas](#)
- [Institut Delors](#)
- Natural Resources Defense Council: [1](#), [2](#).
- United States Environmental Protection Agency: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)