



What does the EU Climate Law have to do with cement?

Committing to climate neutrality in the long term sends an important signal, but getting there needs short-term climate action and will not happen without cleaning up Europe's heavy industry.

The European Green Deal was unveiled by the European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen in December 2019. It is the new Commission's master plan to make Europe climate neutral by 2050, meaning a balance between what we emit and what is absorbed for example by trees.

Following that, the Commission last week presented its proposal for the EU's Climate Law, making the climate-neutrality target legally binding. Later this year, it will be amended by the new EU 2030 target, which will be increased to 50-55% cut in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to replace the current 40% target.

Achieving these goals requires a new industrial policy based on the circular economy. Tomorrow, the Commission will present its industrial strategy, in which it should outline the path towards a zero-carbon industrial sector. A Circular Economy Action Plan is expected to follow the next day.

The Green Deal's first test

We have a heavy climate problem in Europe. Industrial emissions - that represent 16% of the EU's total CO₂ pollution - are not going down and are not expected to do so until 2030.

Yet, the climate emergency requires every sector to do its share. The heavy industry cannot be an exception.

In its industrial strategy, the European Commission will outline how it plans to ensure a sustainable and competitive industry in Europe.

This is the first test for the European Green Deal. If the industrial clean transition is not at the heart of the strategy, the Green Deal will fail one of its major tasks.

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Committing to climate-neutrality sends an important signal and brings investment certainty. But in order to get there, we need short-term climate action. This means ramping up the 2030 climate target to 65% as soon as possible. The industrial strategy must be in line with these targets.

It is not enough to give a general sense of direction of where we're heading in the long term. An industrial strategy will be meaningful only if it includes clear objectives and measures, a pathway for industry to follow and a governance structure to monitor, review and correct the process if needed.

Policy-makers need to understand that competitiveness will be the least of our concerns unless we tackle the climate crisis. The Green Deal and the industrial strategy could be a game-changer in putting Europe and its industry on a zero-carbon path. We should not waste this opportunity. Moving from words to action will be the only way to ensure the industrial strategy's success in helping deliver on the EU Green Deal.