**Definition**

European Climate Law can be defined as a set of legal documents that are directly relevant to climate change mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, or disaster risk management. Specifically, it refers to the body of legal principles, legislation, and regulations within the European Green Deal, designed to address and mitigate the effects of climate change.

**Context**

The European Climate Law sets a legally binding target for Europe’s economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050, which means achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for EU countries. The law also sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Examples include cutting emissions, investing in green technologies, and protecting the natural environment.

**Impact**

This binding law drives investment in green technologies, promotes a circular economy, and supports job creation in sustainable sectors. It mandates that all EU member states contribute to collective climate goals, ensures periodic progress reviews, and advocates for a fair transition to protect vulnerable regions and workers. Additionally, it aligns other EU policies, such as transport and agriculture, with climate objectives, fostering a sustainable economic transformation across Europe.

**Primary Goals**

The law aims to limit global warming and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. Specifically, the targets can be summarized as follows:

* Set the long-term direction of travel for meeting the 2050 climate neutrality objective through all policies, in a socially fair and cost-efficient manner.
* Establish a more ambitious EU 2030 target to set Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate-neutral by 2050.
* Create a system for monitoring progress and taking further action if needed.
* Provide predictability for investors and other economic actors.
* Ensure that the transition to climate neutrality is irreversible.

**Key Provisions**

Key provisions of the Climate Law include:

* **Emission Reduction Targets**: Set limits on greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate climate change, such as the Paris Agreement.
* **Renewable Energy Mandates**: Encourage or require the use of renewables like wind and solar.
* **Carbon Pricing**: Implement taxes or cap-and-trade systems on carbon emissions.
* **Energy Efficiency Standards**: Set requirements for energy use in buildings, vehicles, and industries.
* **Adaptation Plans**: Prepare infrastructure and communities for climate impacts.
* **Reporting and Transparency**: Require regular disclosures on emissions and climate actions.

**Stakeholders**

Stakeholders include governments, businesses, environmental organizations, scientists, and affected communities.

**Implementation**

In 2023, for the first time, the Commission assessed progress toward the climate neutrality and adaptation objectives, as required under the European Climate Law. Although EU greenhouse gas emissions continue to fall at an acceptable rate, the EU is facing several challenges in decarbonizing some of its most polluting industries, namely transport, construction, and agriculture. Moreover, the assessment of progress on the national level of the EU Adaptation Strategy shows that most Member States still need to take significantly more action to adapt to climate change – for instance, in governance, funding, and risk assessments.

**Challenges**

The Climate Law faces challenges regarding delays in the application of its instruments. Furthermore, it encounters barriers in application, with gaps in energy efficiency arising from difficulties with national plans. Indeed, the power of the Commission is limited due to the principle of reservation of sovereignty for Member States. This raises questions about the adequacy of the current institutional framework concerning the stakes facing the EU.

**Conclusions**

To sum up, the Climate Law offers the EU more tools to establish the Paris Agreement’s objectives and be the environmental leader it aspires to be. However, it remains insufficient due to some delays in actions and current challenges.

**Selected sources**

<https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/european-climate-law_en>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021R1119>