Sweden to go carbon neutral by 2045

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Seven out of eight parliamentary parties back proposal for rapid greenhouse gas emissions cuts, boosted by Paris agreement

Sweden’s parliament building in Stockholm (Flickr/Neil Howard)

**Sweden is aiming to neutralise its greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.**

The Scandinavian country will cut territorial emissions at least 85% from 1990 levels and offset the rest by investing in overseas green projects.1

That was the proposal unveiled on Tuesday by a parliamentary committee responsible for environmental policy, backed by seven out of eight parties. Only the Sweden Democrats, who got 13% of votes in the 2014 election, are not represented on the committee.
It is a speeding up of the low carbon transition, from a previous target to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Deputy Prime Minister Asa Romson, of the Green Party, told newspaper Svenska Dagbladet there was a good chance of going faster.

She said: “We actually have all the technology we need to be one hundred percent free of fossil fuels. What we do not have is a market for it. We do not have an economy that can do it, so far.”

Sweden is set to publish the full legislative proposals next month. Government will be required to create a climate action plan every four years and establish an independent advisory body.

In June more details will follow on how to achieve the goal. With more than half of Sweden’s energy already coming from renewable sources – notably hydropower – the focus will be on greening transport. Civil society is also calling for a strategy to deal with emissions from consumer goods imports.

The move follows an agreement between 195 countries in Paris last December to hold global warming “well below 2°C”. That means achieving a balance between emissions sources and sinks in the second half of the century.

In national contributions to the pact, Costa Rica repeated its goal to be carbon neutral by 2021. Norway is aiming for 2050, according to Climate Action Tracker.

The Paris deal “upped the momentum for climate policy,” Asa Persson, researcher at Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) told Climate Home. “Business and industry is showing more and more interest in the climate.”

That renewed enthusiasm has not been evident across Europe, however. The UK’s independent climate advisors recommended no change to its targets post-Paris and Brussels appears more concerned with ratifying the deal than upping ambition.
“It was already clear that Sweden wants to be the best kid in class in the EU, and this development only reinforces that,” said Harro van Asselt, also of SEI.

European leaders meet in March to decide whether to change the bloc’s 2030 climate policy package in light of the Paris agreement.

“With some member states being heavily opposed it’s difficult to see how the Council will agree on increasing ambition,” said van Asselt. But Sweden’s overachievement could leave flexibility for other EU members to underachieve, allowing for “slightly” tougher EU-wide targets.