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[Publication](#) | 10.02.2006

## Climate change risks

**Climate change**, if it hits full scale, will fundamentally **alter the way we live today**, with extreme and irreversible impacts to the environment.

- **Sea levels will rise** due to thermal expansion of seawater and the melting of glaciers and ice caps;
- **Climatic zones and thus ecosystems will shift** towards the poles as temperature rise. Many areas will face a shortage of freshwater and agricultural productivity will fall, turning many regions uninhabitable;
- **Weather extremes**, such as heat waves, floods, droughts and storms are increasing both in number and intensity.

*The 2003 heat wave killed 33.000 people in Europe and caused €13 billion in economic damages while unprecedentedly widespread forest fires in the south of Europe during the recent years have caused the loss of lives, destroyed large ecosystems, and lead to loss of livelihood for many people in the region.*

If emissions are going to rise at current trend, climate change may spiral out of control. Unfortunately the mainstream energy scenarios for the 21st century are not sustainable. Business as usual will lead to an environmental disaster that would hit the poor and the developing world the hardest.

The greenhouse gas (GHG) content in the atmosphere is already higher than ever in the last 740 000 years, probably higher than in several millions of years.

*The insurance company Swiss Re said the economic costs of global warming threaten to double to €120 billion a year in 10 years. The costs of reducing emissions to avoid dangerous climate change are estimated to represent only a fraction of current military spending - nothing compared to the costs of climate change out of control.*

**If we are to limit the dangerous impacts of climate change it is essential that global average temperature rise peaks below 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels** and is brought down as rapidly as possible thereafter. In order to achieve this goal, there must be a major switch to clean energy around the world, commensurate with deep and rapid cuts in CO2 emissions!

**The Greens** remind that **industrialised countries have a major responsibility** for the accumulation of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, both current and historical. The EU must therefore show its leadership by undertaking commitments for strong emissions reductions at home, starting with 30% domestic reductions by 2020 (compared to 1990) and 80% by 2050.

A rapid shift to clean energy, particularly by all industrialised and major industrialising nations, is essential to avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

Therefore **the Greens** ask to:

- **Phase out nuclear**
- **Take measures to save energy;**
- **Boost renewable energies;**
- **Work on intelligent soft mobility ;**
- **Go gradually for a fossil free future;**

European Environment Agency- Climate Change

Climate Change impacts : Report by Friends of the Earth Europe

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

European Climate Change Program (ECCP)

Perspectives of Climate Change Policy in the European Union (pdf)

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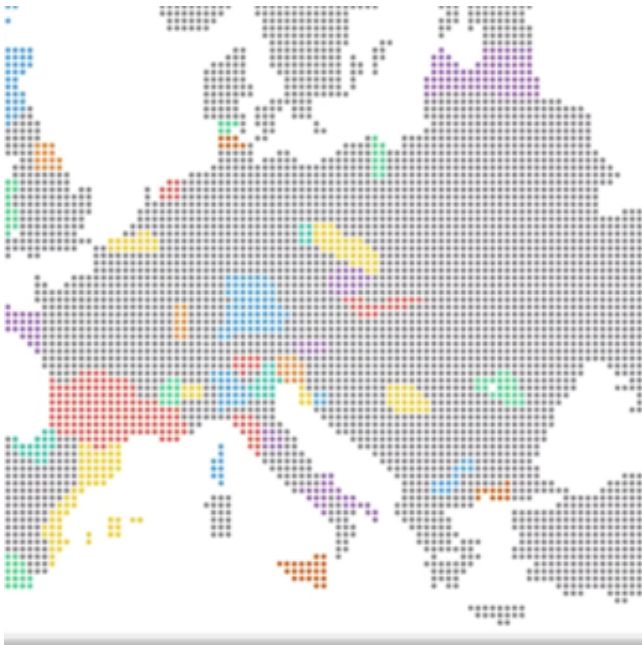
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